Unit Plan Overview

Name: Julia Whitten

Curriculum Title:
Be A-Part-e of Commedia dell'Arte

Topic: Commedia dell'Arte

Grade Level: High School (11th-12th)　　　　　　**Number of Students:** 20

Meetings Per Week and Time: (Example -every day for 60 minutes or every other day for 80 minutes)

MA Standards:

<u>Create</u>

> **Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.** *Apply research to support development of design ideas (e.g., students research cars from the 1920s to design scenery)*
>
> **Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.** *Create a complete design and implementation plan for a theatre work that incorporates elements of theatrical design such as sound, lighting, scenery, and costumes.*

<u>Respond</u>

> **Perceive and analyze artistic work.** *Identify ways a contemporary theatrical work pushes boundaries of a theatrical genre (e.g., comedy, musical).*
>
> **Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.** *Analyze the ways one's own cultural and personal perspectives and biases affect understanding of a theatrical work.*

<u>Connect</u>

> **Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.** *Explain the development of one's aesthetic vision as an actor and how that is represented in a current role.*

<u>Perform</u>

> **Select, analyze and interpret artistic work for presentation.** *Synthesize ideas from research, script analysis, and context to create a performance that is believable, authentic, and relevant in a drama/theatrical work.*
>
> **Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.** *Organize and lead the production of a theatrical work.*
>
> **Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.** *Perform roles that present a range of moods and emotions and causes audience reflection by presenting different styles or viewpoints.*

Unit Overview

Topic: List Your Unit Plan Topic

Facts/Knowledge that students will gain by the end of the unit.

- Commedia dell' Arte characters, also known as 'stock characters' symbolized fixed social types.
- The style of Commedia is distinguished by its identifiable characters, the use of masks, physical comedy, and improvisation.
- Music, dance, witty dialogue, and all kinds of trickery contributed to the comic effects. Commedia dell' Arte originated in Italy in the early 16th century and became popular all over Europe. It has had a strong influence on various performing arts forms such as opera, vaudeville, musical theatre, and even the sit-coms of today.
- Commedia is physical and immediate. It is presentational, and not representational. It is absurdism and not realism.

Skill that students will gain by the end of the unit.

- Performance analysis
- Character analysis: voice and body analysis
- Ensemble playing
- Improvisation
- Script analysis and interpretation

Transferable Concepts that students will gain by the end of the unit.

- Performance Analysis: Critical viewing and analysis of both classical and modern comedic pieces from peers and professionals in the Commedia community
    - Broad application into comedy as a discipline: develop a detailed understanding of how elements of comedy and stock characters appear in popular media that we consume
- Character analysis that leads into interpersonal knowledge and intrapersonal knowledge- how do physical and verbal choices reflect story and personality traits?
- Ensemble work- how do we work together to tell a cohesive and believable story that relates the human experience?

Complex/Creative Processes that students engage in during the unit.

- Create authentic, believable characters using comedic techniques
    - Characters are driven by high stakes (ie- survival)
- Collaborate with a group to create and perform scenes incorporating stock characters in extant scenarios
    - Convert an existing contemporary script into a canovaccio through script analysis
        - receive a new canovaccio and perform it with little preparation time
    - engage with professional commedia work and map out its canovaccio
- Improvisational skills based on the understandings of historical stock characters and plots
- Character study: researching by evaluating and synthesizing cultural and historical information to support artistic choices

Key Vocabulary taught/used by students and teachers during the unit.

- Presentational theatre
- representational theatre
- lazzi
- gromalot
- canovaccio
- absurdism

- mask
- stock character/character archetypes: Magnifico, Innamorati, Pantalone, Il Dottore, Columbina, Brighella, Arlecchino, Il Capitano, Zanni

Prior Knowledge needed by students before beginning the unit.

- Students will have taken an introductory course to acting.
- Students will be familiar with the types of work that contribute to theater production: design (props, costume, scenic, lights, sound), choreography, directing, and management.
- Students will have encountered modern comedic pieces of media (sitcoms, movies, etc).
- Students will be able to analyze a play.

Teacher Resources / Research (videos, books, etc) to support teaching of the unit.

- Teaching Commedia
  - *Teaching Commedia dell'Arte* by Tony Kishawi
  - DBP Lesson: https://dbp.theatredance.utexas.edu/content/commedia-dellarte
  - The artistry of teaching: Commedia Dell'arte's improvisational strategies and its implications for classroom participation
  - Homunculus Theatre Co: Commedia 101
  - Commedia's impact on ensemble based physical theatre: Podcast with Michael Fields
  - An Exploration of Commedia dell'Arte in Relation to Modern Western Pedagogies
  - Canovaccio 1: Final Show, Stage Internazionale Di Commedia Dell'Arte
- Foundations of Commedia
  - The Routledge companion to Commedia dell'Arte, edited by Judith Chaffee and Olly Crick
  - National Theatre's "The World of Commedia dell'Arte" video Series https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_0TAXWt8hY&list=PLFB7C0BBCDCE9B8A9
  - History of Commedia in the US: "Arlecchino Appleseed—How Carlo Mazzone Clementi Brought Commedia dell'arte to the New World"
  - The Body and Meaning in early Commedia
  - The Comic Mask in the Commedia Dell'arte: Actor Training, Improvisation, and the Poetics of Survival.- Antonio Fava

Theories/Theorists and/or Artists/Theatre Companies discussed, explored, or used during the unit.

- Faction of Fools Theatre Company: Based out of Washington, DC (https://www.factionoffools.org/)
- Antonio Fava (mask maker and 'Maestro of Commedia')
- Dell'Arte International: https://dellarte.com/
  - Carlo Mazzone-Clementi
  - Jane Hill
  - Joan Schirle(Founding Artistic Director of Dell'Arte Inc)
  - Michael Fields
- Playwrights:
  - Carlo Goldoni: playwright of *A Servant of Two Masters*
  - Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux: *Changes of Heart*
  - Moliere of *Tartuffe, The Imaginary Invalid*

How do you envision this unit utilizing comprehensive theatre education? (Address all these components in the Venn diagram (page 224 in *Signs of Change).*

- DBTE
  - Researcher: Students are diving into the dramaturgy of how and why commedia originated.

- ○ Critic: Students are critically engaging with commedia performances to help them select modern performances that they have already engaged with.
  - ○ Audience: Students are collectively co-constructing meaning from performances and interpretations.
  - ○ Actor: Students are enacting an improvised sequence based on another group's devised canovaccios.
  - ○ Technician: Students are fabricating 3D models (actual masks)
  - ○ Designer: Students are designing character mood boards.
  - ○ Director: Students are devising and working collaboratively in improv troupes.
  - ○ Playwright: Students are writing their own Canovaccios
- ● Holistic Arts Integration
  - ○ History: Students are studying the culture and history of early 16th century Italy.
  - ○ ELA: Students are writing commedia specific scripts (canovaccios)
  - ○ Visual Art: Students are fabricating masks
  - ○ Physical Education: Students are building physical endurance and stamina while performing.

Scope and Sequence

Lesson # and BIG IDEA	Day #	Enduring Understanding	Essential Question	Objectives	Assessment
Pre-Assessment: Recipe for Comedy *(see Diagnostic Assessment)*					
1: Given Circumstances	1	Commedia has a direct and palpable connection between artists and audience members.

We understand the different character archetypes by first exploring character shape and energy. | 1. What are the components of the world of commedia?
2. Where can we see these components in the media that we consume? | A: Students will collaborate to describe and analyze artifacts from the era in which Commedia originated.
B: Students will apply their understandings from the artifact investigation to research elements of Commedia in contemporary media.
C: Students will apply their understandings from the artifact investigation to ask questions to determine learning goals for the unit. | A: Photograph of 'this setting needs' tableau after artifact investigation
A: See-think-wonder thought diagrams
B: TikTok/Internet Meme Research
C: Question chart |
| 2: Masks and Characters | 2-3 | | 1. Who are the important stock characters in the world of commedia?
2. How does mask work drive the essence of a character? | A: Students will explore the 10 stock characters and how they relate to contemporary characters in popular medias.
B: Students will synthesize the relationships, similarities, and differences between the 10 stock characters through mood boards.
C: Students will collaborate to design and fabricate physical masks or makeup looks for the 10 stock characters *(Contextual note- some of the characters are masked in traditional Commedia and some are unmasked, thus the physical masks or makeup looks)* | A: Character research digital notes *(see Formative Assessment #1)*
B: Visually-mapped mood boards of the 10 stock characters
C: Photographs of the makeup looks or masks of each of the 10 stock characters |
| 3: Body | 4-5 | | 1. How are our bodies tools for character exploration? | A: Students will devise physical transformation pieces to demonstrate evolving from representational to presentational movement
B: Students will be able to identify the elements of drama required to portray the physical characteristics of a specific stock character | A: Recordings of student performances
B: Actor journal entry |
| 4: Voice | 6-7 | Relatability is a key tool when exploring commedia elements. | 1. How does voice modulation communicate authentic and believable character choices?
2. How can we communicate characters that are driven by | A: Students will construct and present a sound library for the 10 stock characters.
B: Students will critically observe peer offerings and contribute to further meaning using diverse communication modes.
C: Students will justify design choices.
D: Students will offer and respond to peer feedback. | A: Sound library playlists
B: Recordings of student group performances
C/D: Liz Lerman Critical response method feedback forms *(see Formative Assessment #2)* , Teacher observation of class reflection |

			logic and high stakes?		
5: Lazzi	8-9	Commedia is about action, present-mindfulness, and clarity of expression.	1. How do recognizable truths about the human experience shape commedia?	A: Students will select, stage, and perform lazzis from existing commedia canovaccios. ("Chamber theatre" a commedia piece) (apply, analyze, evaluate, create) B: Students will explain their group's process and reflect on their artifacts from it.	A: Script analysis sheets A: Video record performances B: Explain and present process to whole group A/B: Individual Journal reflection *(see Formative Assessment #3)*
6: Canovaccios	10-13		1. How can we collaborate to design, devise, and share original canovaccios? 2. How can we critically view and participate in comedic works?	A: Students will visually map the structure and components of a professional commedia performance. B: Students will select relevant source material and arrange a canovaccio from it. C: Students will improvise a commedia performance when given a peer-created canovaccio. *(see Summative Assessment)*	A: Visual map B: Scripts C: Actor journals C: See-think-wonder thought diagrams
Post-Assessment: Recipe for Commedia *(see Diagnostic Assessment)*					

Diagnostic Assessment

Materials: Recipe for _____ worksheet (included on the next page), pencil

Directions: Invite participants to take 5 minutes to create a list of words that describe components of comedy. Next, ask participants to describe the elements, structure, and language in a recipe. If a group has not seen a written recipe it might be important to share an example and make observations. Introduce the task. Turn your list of words that describe who you are into a Recipe for Comedy (for the pre-assessment) or a Recipe for Commedia (for the post-assessment), using the structure and format of a recipe to share your information. Each Recipe for _____should include a list of ingredients and measurements, cooking directions and serving directions. Participants will need 10-30 minutes to complete the task, needing less time in the pre-assessment phase, and hopefully more time in the post-assessment phase.

Pre-Assessment Side Coaching:
- *Think of the last piece of media that made you laugh. What about it was funny?*

Post-Assessment Side Coaching:
- *Now that we've worked with Commedia characters, concepts, and tools, make a recipe for an effective, truthful, funny Commedia performance.*
- *What needs to happen to make a Commedia troupe funny?*

A Recipe for _____

Serves: _____

Ingredients: _____   _____

                     _____   _____

                     _____   _____

                     _____   _____

                     _____   _____

Directions:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

Benchmark Assessment

Name and Date	State or National	Subject	Standard Number	Standard	Does Not Meet Expectations	Developing	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations	Comments
	MA State	Theatre	T.T.Cr.01	**Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.** *Apply research to support development of design ideas (e.g., students research cars from the 1920s to design scenery)*					
	MA State	Theatre	T.T.Cr.02	**Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.** *Create a complete design and implementation plan for a theatre work that incorporates elements of theatrical design such as sound, lighting, scenery, and costumes.*					
	MA State	Theatre	A.T.R.07	**Perceive and analyze artistic work.** *Identify ways a contemporary theatrical work pushes boundaries of a theatrical genre (e.g., comedy, musical).*					
	MA State	Theatre	A.T.R.08	**Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.** *Analyze the ways one's own cultural and personal perspectives and biases affect understanding of a theatrical work.*					
	MA State	Theatre	A.T.Co.10	**Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art.** *Explain the development of one's aesthetic*					

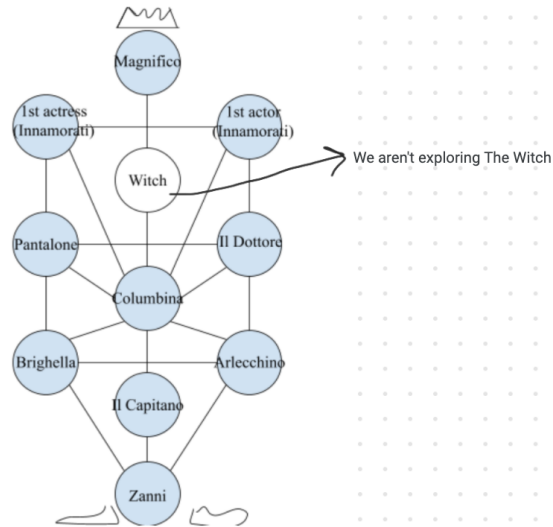|									
				vision as an actor and how that is represented in a current role.					
	MA State	Theatre	A.T.P.04	**Select, analyze and interpret artistic work for presentation**. *Synthesize ideas from research, script analysis, and context to create a performance that is believable, authentic, and relevant in a drama/theatrical work.*					
	MA State	Theatre	A.T.P.05	**Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.** *Organize and lead the production of a theatrical work.*					
	MA State	Theatre	A.T.P.06	**Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.** *Perform roles that present a range of moods and emotions and causes audience reflection by presenting different styles or viewpoints.*					

Formative Assessment #1
Character Research Digital Notes (From Day 2)

Character Research Digital Notes

Name:_____

Directions: Make a copy of this jamboard to edit as your own. Using sticky notes and text boxes, post your connections between commedia characters and characters that you know from today.

Magnifico

1st actress (Innamorati)

1st actor (Innamorati)

Witch → We aren't exploring The Witch

Pantalone

Il Dottore

Columbina

Brighella

Arlecchino

Il Capitano

Zanni

Students will complete a jamboard to log their research of the 10 main commedia stock characters. Using prior knowledge of contemporary media (movies, TV, politics, social media, books, etc), they will find examples of how these archetypes continue today.

Day 7   *Liz Lerman Critical Response*

Directions: Take a moment to individually reflect on how the other group did a gromalot interpretation of your group's original silent improv sequence. Respond to the following prompts!

Members of your group:_____

Members of the group that you're responding to:_____

*I appreciate...*_____

_____

_____

_____

*I wonder....*_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

*I discovered....*_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Day 9   *Actor Reflection Journal*

Directions: Take a moment to individually reflect on your group's lazzi performance, as well our class reflection discussion. What was it like to enact an existing canovaccio? What was it like to see other canovaccios performed in class? How do recognizable truths about the human experience shape commedia?

Summative/Authentic Assessment

Deliverable	Criteria	1	2	3	4
Visual Map of Professional Commedia Performance *Objective: Students will visually map the structure and components of a professional commedia performance.*	*Extent of coverage and clear communication of content understandings*	Limited or ineffective effort to connect main plot points. Limited use of Commedia vocabulary/concepts.	Good or adequate effort to connect main plot points together. Commedia vocabulary/concepts are used. Average understanding of the topic	Effective effort to connect main plot points together. Good use of of commedia vocabulary/concepts that convey a good understanding of the topic.	Highly effective effort to connect main plot points together. Highly effective use of commedia vocabulary/concepts that convey a deep understanding of the topic.
Original Canovaccio Script *Objective: Students will select relevant source material and arrange a canovaccio from it.*	*Quality of Construction/ Final Product*	Canovaccio script is unorganized and cannot be transferred on its feet.	An attempt has been made in the form and function of the script.	Canovaccio script is structured and clear so that it can be performed by another group.	Canovaccio script is well-structured and incredibly clear so that it can be easily performed by another group.
Final Comedia Improv Performance *Objective: Students will improvise a commedia performance when given a peer-created canovaccio.*	*Thoroughness, Artistic Choices, and Use of Principles of Commedia*	The troupe does not use the principles of Commedia. There are no developed stock characters from the Canovaccio.	The troupe uses a few elements and principles of Commedia, but needs to continue an exploration. Troupe has developed characters from the Canovaccio that lack distinction, and there are many drops in character.	The troupe uses some elements and principles of Commedia, but needs to continue an exploration. Troupe has developed distinct stock characters from the Canovaccio with body and voice modulations. There are occasional drops in character.	The troupe uses the elements and principles of Commedia clearly. Troupe has developed interesting and distinct stock characters from the Canovaccio with bold body and voice modulations that are maintained throughout the scene. Troupe does not break character.