EARLY RUSSIAN THEATRE

AND

COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE

by

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ABSTRACT

Italian *commedia dell'arte* in 18th century Russia is a phenomenon which demands careful attention from students of the Russian theatre, particularly since comedy was the most important dramatic development of this century. It is significant that Russian dramaturgy vaulted from infancy to maturity in the short space of a century. This remarkable literary feat was contingent upon the influence of *commedia dell'arte* on Russian comedy.

One hundred years before the Italian Comics first graced the Russian stage, *commedia dell'arte*-inspired interludes which came from Poland with the Church School Theatre entertained the Slavic indigenes. Later, German players offered the Russian public their adaptations of Italian improvised comedy, and finally, the Comic Masks accepted an invitation to animate the court. The Masks quickly won a large appreciative audience and, as a result, distinguished Italian comic artists were attracted to Russia. In their wake followed a host of minor comic performers who flooded the country with productions of *commedia dell'arte*, *opera buffa* and *intermezzi*. This cultural 'invasion' which lasted well into the next century, left a permanent impression on the Russian comic repertory.

Works of 18th century Russia's most typical comic dramatists, Ya. B. Knyazhnin and I. A. Krylov, have been selected for analysis since they harbour the key principles of Italian *commedia dell'arte* and therefore facilitate a fruitful comparison.

The inclusion of a short section dealing specifically with *commedia dell'arte* is intended to outline briefly its artistry
in order to make more evident the relationship between the Russian comedy and the Italian Comedy of Masks.

The comprehensive bibliography presents a spectrum of works concerning this topic but not necessarily referred to in the thesis.
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INTRODUCTION

Russian, Soviet and Western scholars have not given due consideration to the role of Italian culture in the development of the Russian theatre. Although acknowledgements of foreign influence abound, attempts to provide pertinent details to substantiate these general remarks have been few and hardly adequate. In particular, the responsibility of the Italian commedia dell'arte in the development of the early Russian theatre has not been properly assessed.

Among the first to recognize the need for serious study of this theme was the well-known Russian theatrical scholar, K. Miklashevsky, who comments in his La Commedia dell'arte:

"Generally speaking, the role of Italian comic performers in Russia and the influence exerted by them on the Russian theatre, Russian actors and Russian art is a very attractive theme for the Russian researcher, but since my work is concerned with the 'Italian comedy' as such, I shall resist the excursion...." 1

His suggestion, apparently, has been heeded neither by the Russian nor by the non-Russian researcher, with the exception of E. Lo Gatto.

In a volume edited by V. V. Kallash, Istoriya russkogo teatra, S. K. Shambinago also underlines the importance of Italian improvised comedy in Russia:

"The popularity of Italian comedy left such a deep imprint that even at the present time [1914] Arlecchino and Colombina appear on stage. The great interest in commedia dell'arte is mainly the result of the replacement of the written text by improvisation." 2

Recognition by Russians of the importance of the Italian Comedy of
Masks in world theatre is indicated by the numerous comprehensive Russian publications on the subject. Yet these authors fail to fit the Masks into the evolution of their own theatre, even though many of their volumes were conceived in the shadow of a re-birth of *commedia dell'arte* in Russia, an event marked by A. Blok's publication of *Balaganchik* (1906) and by subsequent *commedia dell'arte* inspired presentations by such noted producers as E. Vakhtangov, V. Meyerhold, A. Tairov, and F. Kommissarzhevsky. At the Vakhtangov Theatre in Moscow, as recently as the 1967-1968 theatrical season, E. Vakhtangov's improvised version of Carlo Gozzi's *Turandot* was performed; *lazzi* satirizing current events, a vital element in *commedia dell'arte*, especially appealed to the spectators.

Outside Russia, Miklashevsky's proposal tempted the noted Italian scholar of theatre, E. Lo Gatto. In his two volume *Storia del teatro russo*, he devotes ten pages to a chapter entitled "The Influence of *Commedia dell'arte* on Russian Theatre". Most other non-Russian researchers, confronted with the Italian-Russian literary interchange, content themselves with the usual: Yes, without doubt, the Italian comedy was a leading force in the development of Russian theatre.³

It is not difficult to explain why Russia was charmed by the comic Masks at a time when this genre had already lost its appeal in the more literate Western Europe. The Russian love of improvisation, buffoonery, acrobatics, etc., goes back a long way. Russian folk comedy, like the more sophisticated *commedia dell'arte*, was characterized by improvisation of action and dia-
logue. A coarse humour and bright, lively comic scenes were qualities also shared by the folk interludes of Russia and the Italian improvised comedy. The *commedia dell'arte* stress on vigorous action, pantomime and musical accompaniment significantly diminished the customary importance of language, thus making their presentations more readily acceptable.

Interludes, having their origin in *commedia dell'arte*, appeared on the Kiev Theological Academy stage in the 16th century. Summoned to animate the solemn morality plays, the magnetic interludes eventually replaced them altogether. As interest in theatre intensified, demands were made on Western artists to perform for the monarchy and aristocracy. As a result, Russia's first theatre was established toward the end of the 17th century. Soon after, foreign theatrical companies brought secular repertories to Moscow and Petersburg: German troupes heralded the arrival of the 18th century with performances of their comedies, many of which were based on *commedia dell'arte* and required the actors to improvise on simple themes. Before long they were followed by Italian composers, musicians, dancers and the comic Masks themselves. At the court of Anna Ioannovna, Russians first enjoyed the famous *commedia dell'arte*, *opera buffa* and *intermezzi*. Italian actors, however, continued throughout the 18th century to amuse the court and the general public as well, expanding their repertory to include the comedies of the Venetian playwrights.

The 18th century Russian dramatists, I. A. Krylov and Ya. B. Knyazhnin, among others, show considerable appreciation for the Comedy of Masks. Their comic works are based on dramatic de-
vices that were invented or at least isolated and proven by the Italians. The plot blueprint, the dramatis personae that remain constant from play to play, and the dependence on boisterous activity for comic effect characterize the comedies of many early Russian playwrights and readily identify their source of inspiration.

Since the importance of the comedy in 18th century Russian literary developments cannot be over-emphasized, an examination of its physiognomy against a background of commedia dell'arte is distinctly worthwhile.
CHAPTER I

ORIGINS OF THE RUSSIAN THEATRE

In order to understand the repercussions of Italian Commedia dell'arte in Russia, a brief look at pre-Eighteenth century Russian theatre is a necessary digression.

The oldest form of theatre in Russia, the folk theatre, evolved over a period of decades from pagan peasant rituals. The tilling of the soil and the harvesting of crops, which demanded most of the peasant's time and energy, often became an important and vivid part of these rituals. Offerings and prayers were made to win the favour of the gods, thereby ensuring a bountiful harvest. Competitive ceremonial games of skill, in which peasants vied with one another in much the same way as loggers or cowboys do now, challenged their ability to perform the tasks upon which their lives depended. These elements of pagan ritual gradually developed into brilliantly animated performances requiring the participation of many people.

Special events in the lives of peasants were also filled with folk traditions which became more and more theatrical in tone. A wedding, for example, became a highly complex ceremony demanding of the participants, especially the bridal party, considerable grace and expertise. In order to heighten the excitement, jesters were often hired to perform comic dialogues.

Specific holidays were also occasions around which various forms of entertainment developed. During Butter-Week, for instance, people masqueraded as animals, gypsies and rob-
bers in a manner characteristic of the Western Carnival; mask-
ed performers wandered about improvising farces and telling
stories wherever they could gather together enough specta-
tors.

Eventually, the more outstanding peasant perform-
ances were adopted by urban residents who modified them to
suit the new social milieu. As a result, the various roles
of a largely pagan ritual became more clearly defined and
consequently more important.

This popular drama ultimately found its way into
the repertory of professional actors. Among the most enjoyed
were the Skomorokhi who allegedly found their way into Russia
from Byzantium during the 10th century.¹ Travelling through-
out the country, these comedians disseminated plays, songs,
and dances to interested spectators from all levels of so-
ciety.

The Skomorokhi played musical instruments, perform-
ed gymnastic feats and acted out simple comedies. Their re-
pertory contained rough dialogue scenes of a comic-satirical
nature which were the direct ancestors of popular Russian co-
medy. Although more primitive, the Skomorokhi performances
were comparable in many respects to early Italian commedia
dell'arte: Skomorokhi often wore masks, improvised on simple
themes and entertained crowds gathered in the streets. The
dialogues were performed either directly by the actors or
with the aid of puppets. Both in the plays' subject matter,
which was made up of traditional folk elements, and the manner
in which they were staged uniquely suited a nomadic existence. As their farces, puppet shows and acrobatics had no fixed form or content, and as no stage or props were required other than the most basic, such as a bench or a bottle of wine, the actors could easily adapt their performances to the particular situations in which they found themselves.

Although these 'Merrymen' had gained great popularity, they eventually fell into disfavour with the Church. The broad satire of their farces provoked attempts by the clergy to forbid their productions. The expression "Bog dal popa; chort - skomorokhi" was probably coined by an outraged clergyman.

The puppet shows which the Skomorokhi introduced into Russia were possibly their most popular and unique feature. They wore large sheets of material which they could invert over their heads to form portable stages upon which to present their finger puppet shows. M. Slonim, in his book on Russian theatre, comments:

"Between the 10th and 16th centuries the puppet show was one of the beloved forms of theatrical entertainment. In almost every country fair or market place in Russia large crowds watched with delight the antics of Petrushka, the Russian Harlequin" 2

The Petrushka scene was completely Russian in origin. Not until the 18th century did it merge with commedia dell'arte and opera buffa to give rise to Russian comic opera and satirical comedy.

Largely due to Tsar Aleksey Mikhailovich's decree
of 1645, which effectively banished the Skomorokhi, by the end of the 17th century their place was taken over by German comedians "who changed the folk themes into Harlequinades with acrobatics and juggling". Until the end of the 19th century these German comedians, who were undoubtedly acquainted with commedia dell'arte, travelled from city to city pitching their huge tents which accommodated their comic performances in squares and market places.

A more elaborate puppet theatre than that which the Skomorokhi cultivated came to the Kievian Theological Academy (Kievskaya Mohylianska Akademiya) from Poland in the 16th century. In a specially designed booth called Vertep, which was divided into three storeys, various episodes from the Bible were enacted. The first and third storeys were occupied by the performing figures, the middle one by the machinery necessary to operate the marionettes. These performances formed the chief attraction at the large fairs held in many principal cities in the Ukraine.

The tone and content of a Vertep play was at first strictly ecclesiastical, but gradually a secular note was added when the religious representations were followed by or interspersed with farcical dialogues and scenes comparable to the Italian intermezzo. As long as the plays maintained their religious objectives, they were patronized by the clergy and performed in the churches. When, however, these plays took a turn toward secularization, they were strictly forbidden. Nevertheless, the severest prohibi-
tions did not curtail these puppet shows and they continued to enjoy popularity well into the 17th century. From the middle of this century, the vertep play assumed a wider scope by representing humorous scenes in which historical episodes and contemporary follies were vividly caricatured.

During the 17th century another important theatrical influence was introduced. The Church School Theatre, which played a significant role in the cultural life of many European countries, reached the Kiev Academy and from there spread to Moscow and other Russian cities. The Academy's repertory was carefully selected in order to popularize religious morality in allegorical form. The school plays, similar to the liturgical drama and the mystery play of Western Europe, had biblical themes, chosen particularly from the episodes of Christ's life. Unlike the other forms of theatre art mentioned above, these dramas had literary texts and were performed by trained companies whose instructors were also responsible for composing comedies and tragedies for presentation at the Academy. Students were taught the art of acting in accordance with the principles compiled by F. Lang, which were published in 1727 and based on methods developed by the Jesuit School.

Dramatic performances were not confined to the school itself: during festivals and summer holidays, students staged their plays beyond the walls of the Academy. Although the school utilized the theatre for essentially didactic purposes, the experience of its actors outside the
Academy provoked a new realism which filtered into the compositions and changed the tone of the performances. The original morality plays gradually lost their staid and stereotyped form, as the writers began incorporating into their subject matter the daily life they saw and experienced.

As secularization of dramaturgy increased, with the decline in absolute ecclesiastical authority, the school theatre turned from religious didacticism to political propaganda.

Inherited along with the church school plays from the West were little scenes known as interludes: humorous sketches which were often inserted after each act of a serious play. E. Lo Gatto, a respected Italian critic of theatre, elaborates:

"L'intermezzo o interludio era infatti noto già da circa due secoli nei paesi d'Europa come mezzo di distrarre l'ascoltatore di drammi religiosi o storici, con divertimenti o facezie tra un atto a l'altro. Si tratta di scherzi di contadini non collegati affatto con l'azione del dramma. In Russia l'uso dell'intermezzo venne, come il "dramma scolastico", dalla Polonia, dove s'era formato sotto l'influenza delle farse francesi e della commedia dell'arte." 5

These interludes, modified by the Kiev playwrights as a result of their contact with secular life and folk art, eventually achieved greater significance than the school plays. Apparently, the first professional Russian dramatists of the 18th century drew from these interludes material with which they created their first comedies.
In a volume edited by P. N. Berkov, *Russkaya narodnaya drama XVII-XX vekov*, a collection of Russian folk drama includes the following interludes:

"Gaer, pop, pod'yachiy i monakh  
Kherlikin i shlyakhtich. Intermediya 1-ya  
Kherlikin i shlyakhtich. Intermediya 2-ya  
Kherlikin i shkolyary  
Kherlikin i sud'ya  
Payats " 6

These interludes, obviously derived from *commedia dell'arte*, resemble the Italian *lazzi*, improvised during the course of a performance by the *zanni* - usually Arlecchino or Brighella. The appearance in Russia of the "hand-me-down" Italian interlude from Poland, ranks among the first of foreign trends to make themselves felt on early Russian theatre. However, before significant foreign influence was exerted on its course, Russian theatre had already reached a level of maturity which included religious plays with written texts, comic interludes and improvised farces of Skomorokhi. Secularization brought the above mentioned genres together, producing a more virulent hybrid of native theatre that competed with the Western European theatre for the attention of Russian dramatists.

As early as the 16th century, when Italian architects and technicians came to Moscow at the invitation of Ivan III, Western Europeans, bringing with them theatrical and literary innovations, had begun to filter into Russia. One of the first to acknowledge Western technological and cultural achievements was Tsar Boris Godunov:
"Understanding the superiority of Western education and technique, he was friendly toward foreigners and was the first of the Moscow rulers to send Russian youths abroad for training."  

That few, if any, of the students returned is incidental considering the significance of the Tsar's intent.

Throughout the 17th century, as Russia became more widely known and accepted abroad, contacts with Western Europe increased. Westerners invited to Moscow were no longer reluctant to come to what had been previously considered a backward and barbarous country.

The German Colony (German Village) that flourished in Moscow during the 17th century was an important source of Western culture. Merchants settling in the German Village brought with them new ideas and methods, and, most significant for our particular study, their own entertainment. Among the residents were people well acquainted with the western theatre. As the villagers were not completely isolated from the Russian population, a useful exchange evidently took place, thereby arousing Russian interest in western entertainment. It is not surprising that Aleksey Mikhailovich succeeded in finding sufficient theatrical talent in the village to establish Russia's first court theatre.

Russians travelling in the West brought back impressions that helped to stimulate interest in drama. Records show that as early as the 15th century they travelled to Ferrara and Florence:

"La prima di esse (queste testimonianze)
risale alla prima metà del sec. XV, e precisamente al 1437-39 quando il metropolita Isidoro venne a Ferrara e a Firenze per partecipare al Concilio di quegli anni. Tra gli appartenenti al suo seguito c'era il vescovo di Suzdal'Avraam, che ci ha lasciato un breve racconto della rappresentazione dell'Annunziata di Feo Belcari, alla quale i russi assistettero a Firenze. In questo racconto l'interesse del vescovo suzdaliano sembra anche rivolto allo spettacolo in quanto tale; egli ci da informazioni intorno al palco costruito nella chiesa per la rappresentazione, sui vestiti dei personaggi, sui disegni del sipario e sulle macchine per lo spettacolo. ...Il Varneke rileva, a proposito del vescovo Avraam, che la narrazione del suo viaggio in Italia dovette suscitare interesse nei lettori, perché altrimenti non si spiegherebbe il gran numero di copie della sua opera giunte fino a noi." 8

A more vivid account of foreign performances is found in the travel diary of Peter Tolstoy who visited Venice in 1698. He described the spectacles he attended as follows:

"...in Venice operas and comedies are being performed and they are so wonderful that no one can describe them adequately. Nowhere in the whole world are there such wonderful operas and comedies." 9

Tolstoy went on to record in detail the nature of these performances. It was accounts such as these, together with cultural developments of the 1600's, that encouraged the Russian nobility to have such attractions staged.

The accumulation of native experience and of impressions from abroad bore fruit in 1672, the year Russia's first theatre, the cultural highlight of the 17th century, was established.
CHAPTER II

PART I - THE COURT THEATRE AND COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE: 1672-1725

The 17th century witnessed an extensive remodeling of Russia's social and economic structure. Contacts with Western Europe, relaxation of church doctrine, an increase in literacy, due to work of the academies, and an increase in availability of printed matter, created the basis for the spread of information which, in turn, resulted in the consolidation of a new national outlook.

During this period of transition were initiated developments in the arts that were instrumental in providing a firm basis for future progress in theatre. The rise of secular art coincided with a disruption of ancient religious canons. As a result, painting became less austere, the female form and love scenes achieved prominence. Artists turned to a depiction of feasts, festival processions and dances in an attempt to capture the emerging mood of realism. Substantial progress also took place in poetry and music: singing, for example, acknowledged the transition with the appearance of the lyric genres. Keeping in step, the first Russian composers began their work: such were Vasily Titov, Nikolai Kalachnikov, Nikolai Babikin and others.¹

As early as 1660 Tsar Aleksey Mikhailovich had
turned his attention toward theatre. In that year he com-
missioned the Englishman, Ivan Gebdon, to go in search of
foreign specialists of various skills, including people cap-
pable of performing comedies. Gebdon managed to hire a group
of comedians and it is possible that these same actors per-
formed in a comedy staged by the English Ambassador at Moscow,
the Earl of Carlisle, in 1664. Some of the subsequent per-
formances were attended by the Tsar and members of his court.  

By 1672, Tsar Aleksey had had ample opportunity
to consider the merits of a theatre at court. Deciding in
its favour, he sent Colonel Nicolas von Staden abroad to find
and bring back to Russia a company of actors and musicians.
Von Staden succeeded in hiring the famous German actor and
impressario, Johann Felten, the prima donna of the theatre
of Copenhagen and other performers. However, at the last
moment, they refused to make the arduous journey to Moscow.

The now impatient Tsar did not wait for von Staden's
return, but instructed his chief advisor, Artamon Matveyev,
to seek out persons residing in Moscow qualified to stage
comedies. The natural choice for organizer of a court the-
atre was Johann Gottfried Gregory, a resident of the German
Village.

On June 4, 1672, an order was issued to Gregory to
stage a comedy based on the book of Esther from the Bible.
With the assistance of a German translator, a stage director
and sixty-four persons, he immediately began rehearsals for
the opening performance which took place on the evening of
October 17, 1673. It lasted for ten hours. To succeeding performances, the Tsar invited his family, his boyars and high officials. The court theatre quickly became exceedingly popular and successful.

The repertory consisted of a number of ponderous religious comedies: David and Goliath, Judith, Bayazet, and Tamerlane, and interludes such as Orpheus and Bacchus and Venus. These plays were borrowed mostly from the repertory of the Kievian Academy. It is interesting to note that the interludes performed were those that came to Russia from Poland and which, according to Lo Gatto, had their origin in commedia dell'arte. P. N. Arapov claims that a famous comedy by Molière with interludes, Vrach' protiv voli, was translated into Russian and performed at the court theatre at this time. He adds:

"Molière's comedy in 17th century Russia is an interesting and important fact in the history of our Enlightenment."

Performances at court were given twice a year - in November and at the end of January. Two main themes found expression on the stage of the court theatre: the social satire of popular farces and the religious didacticism of the Church School Theatre. Historical or biblical material provided tragic elements for the serious parts, whereas comic parts were based on domestic episodes which had constituted the subject matter for the interludes. The main figure in the serious plays was often tailored to reflect a benevolent image of the tsar. A new element, ballet, was added to the repertory of the court theatre and was first performed by the
engineer, Nickolai Lion, organizer and lead dancer, and his students who studied drama under Gregory. They performed a ballet called Orpheus, probably the above noted interlude adapted for ballet.

In 1673 Gregory initiated a theatrical school with an enrollment of 26 pupils, the children of commoners and sub-clerks. They thus became the first group of actors trained at a dramatic school in Russia. The fact that the school's expenses were paid by the Tsar's treasury is testimony to his approval of the theatre and of Gregory's efforts. These Russian actors began taking part in performances after 1673. (Ostrovsky chose this event as a theme for his play, Komik 17-ogo stoletiya, in honour of the 200th anniversary of the Russian theatre.)

When Hubner became director of the theatre after Gregory's death in 1675, the repertory assumed a more secular character. However, Hubner was relieved of his duties in the same year by the director of the Russian School Theatre, Stephan Chizhinsky, possibly because his repertory did not please the clergy. Chizhinsky produced two comedies, David and Goliath and Bacchus and Venus, neither of which has been preserved. However, Vsevolodsky-Gerngross speculates that the first was a religious morality play, the second a frivolous interlude. The most interesting and important element of the repertory performed at this first Russian theatre was the interlude, precursor to the 18th century Russian comedy, originating in the Italian Comedy of Masks, but colored
by local themes and situations.

After Tsar Aleksey's death in 1676, official performances at court were suspended. Only the School Theatre remained active. Amateur functions continued unofficially in the Tsar's palace. His daughter, Sophia, wrote plays and acted with a group of amateurs from her own court. Despite her efforts, however, for the next twenty-five years the Russian theatre fell into a state of relative dormancy. Responsibility for its revival at the court and civic level rested with Aleksey's son, Peter I, who adapted the theatre to his westernization program, making it a permanent and vital element of Russian culture.
PART II - THE PUBLIC THEATRE, A WESTERN REPERTORY, AND COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE.

That society was ready for change had already become evident during the reign of Aleksey Mikhailovich. However, it was his son, Peter I, prepared to learn from the experience of the West, who introduced Russia to the Industrial Age and who directed its particular influence on Russian life. Its ramifications included the specialization of human function and the categorization of culture into its disciplines, i.e. poetry, drama, music, dancing, etc. (Folk ritual had used all these elements together, in a single presentation.)

Although Peter I became ruler of Russia in 1689, it was not until the beginning of the 18th century that he turned his attention to the theatre. Consequently, a public theatre was not constructed on Red Square until 1702, when the first western company of professional actors presented its repertory. Amateur productions increased as a result of the work in the academies and of the general upsurge of interest in drama. The interlude which figured so prominently in the development of Russian comedy, gained considerable popularity. The fore-runners of professional dramatists appeared, brightening the prospects for theatre in Russia.

In 1701, Peter I sent Yan Splavski, a puppet show comedian, to Europe in search of a drama producer. In Gdansk, Splavski hired Johann Kunst who brought to Moscow a German theatrical company and the repertory of Johann Felten, a
famous 17th century German impresario. P. O. Morozov comments that Felten claims an important post in the history of German theatre, since he was the spokesman for a new trend in folk drama, and that his work had a great influence on the Russian stage of the Petrine era.\(^6\) Bringing Felten's repertory to Moscow was Kunst's noteworthy contribution, for it remained on Russian stages for the entire century.

Interestingly enough, Felten was a keen student of the Italian commedia dell'arte and created a number of plays and scenarios in that comic genre. B. V. Varneke, in his History of the Russian Theatre, comments:

"Under the influence of the Italian commedia dell'arte, Felten's repertoire included a number of improvised comedies for which only a general plan of the script was outlined in advance. Guided by the outline, the actors could fill it in with scenes of their own invention, so that the play gradually took shape in the course of the preliminary rehearsals."\(^7\)

Kunst had been a student under Felten. Therefore, when he became leader of his own company of actors, he followed his teacher's theatrical methods and while in Russia his troupe used the scenarios prepared by Felten. According to S. S. Ignatov, "The repertory of Felten's troupe, the manner of acting - all this Kunst brought with him to Moscow. . . . We have the basis to believe that in Moscow Kunst's troupe did not completely disregard improvisation."\(^8\)

A theatre was prepared in Red Square for the first play by Kunst's troupe to which the general public was invited:
"... on the 14th of December of the year 1702, the first performance took place with the participation of Russian actors (later works came to be presented entirely by Russian actors.)."

Thus not only did Kunst introduce a western repertory to Moscow, but he also trained Russian drama enthusiasts to perform these works. Vsevolodsky-Gerngross proposes that Kunst's repertory included French Classical Tragedy, Italian Comedy of Masks, Pastorals, Opera, Ballet, Folk Farces, etc. Other plays produced were variations on currently popular drama in the west - The Honest Traitor by A. Cicognini, Jodelet the Prince by Corneille and Don Pedro and Don Juan.

Although Johann Kunst's tenure as director of the Moscow public theatre was relatively brief, from 1701 to 1703, the repercussions lasted for many years; comic works from his repertory were performed until well into the 1800's. His initial efforts with respect to the production of improvised comedy were reinforced some years later by Italian theatre companies performing at the courts of Anna Ioannovna, Elizabeth Petrovna and Catherine II.

Soon after Kunst's departure, direction of the theatre and school was entrusted to Otto Furst. However, the theatre did not meet with expected results, and in 1706 performances in Moscow were discontinued. Having more confidence in the receptiveness of the St. Petersburg audiences, Peter I moved the theatre there in 1709. Comedies had been performed in St. Petersburg as early as 1703. A German troupe called Mann arrived toward the end of 1703 and, if we are to
believe the account given by Ignatov, "despite the fact that the idiotic comedians performed their plays in German, the audience was insatiable".11

Closure of the public theatre on Red Square placed the onus of continuing and preserving drama in the hands of amateurs and students. Theatrical productions staged during the Petrine era took root in the higher strata of society where the theatre became quite fashionable. After 1706, amateur theatres appeared one after another at various levels of society and with them, the first secular dramatists.

Peter I's sister, Natalia Alekseyevna, a dilettante, in 1707 produced plays, some of her own composition, at the court theatre of her father, Aleksey Mikhailovich, in the village of Preobrazhenskoye. A foreign visitor wrote the following description:

"The princess herself composed tragedies and comedies in Russian, borrowing the plots therefore partly from the Bible and partly from secular events. The Harlequin, chosen from among senior army officers, broke in intermittently with his jests. Eventually a narrator appeared who explained the plot of the play to the audience...." 12

This allusion to a Harlequinade attests to Natalia's acquaintance with the comic interlude of the type found in Felten's repertory.

The following list of plays found in the cathedral library at Veliky Ustyug is thought to have been performed at Natalia's amateur theatre:
"The religious plays included the comedy About St. Catherine, the comedy Eudoxia, the Martyr, Judith, the comedy The Prophet Daniel, the comedy To Christmas, the comedy St. Andrew, the comedy on the Mother of God, and the comedy Varlaam and Josaphat. The following comedies were of a secular character: Khrisanf and Daria, Peter's Golden Keys, On the Italian Margrave and the Excessive Frivolity of His Margrave, and On the Beautiful Melusina." 13

According to Varneke, these plays were similar to the comic repertory of Johann Felten, which suggests that at least the secular comedies could have been performed in a manner resembling the Italian commedia dell'arte. After closure of the public theatre in Red Square, all the costumes were sent over to Natalia Alekseyevna's theatre at Preobrazhenskoye. Later, in 1711, Natalia also received all the translations of Kunst's repertory (probably the above quoted list) from the collection of the Public Theatre.

A contemporary of Natalia's and a student of J. Kunst, Semyon Smirnov, is considered one of Russia's first secular dramatists. Two of his compositions have been preserved: Burlesque About Tonvurtin, The old Polish Nobleman with His Daughter, Abridged. Varneke writes, concerning the latter:

"The supplementary word 'abridged' (perechnyaya) shows that only the scenario was composed, and improvisations were later added to it. We have one of those interludes which afforded relief in serious plays and gave particular pleasure to the unsophisticated spectators...In the beginning of the first scene there is an old 'mountebank'; he examines his appearance and exclaims:

'Where is to be found such a bold fellow, such a handsome, corpulent chap,
who knows how to wrestle and to box and to run amuck with the goats! Indeed, there's no one like myself! I have bony hips and a heavy hand! When I strike a dead cock - all his entrails fall out at once. And if I strike a fly, its spirit leaves its body. And even if I have to deal with a whole bunch of gnats, I shall disperse them all as so many thieves. I am surprised myself that I was born that strong and bold, and that I'm here midst young and old!" 14

This burlesque monologue smacks of Arlecchino's part in a typical commedia dell'arte lazzo with all its vulgarity, bravado and overstatement for comic effect. This interlude is very likely representative of those in Kunst's repertory, since Smirnov was his student, and, therefore, leads us to believe that the first western interludes to come to Russia were of this calibre. The slap-stick tone of such interludes was especially attractive to the as yet unsophisticated Russian spectator - a major reason for the success of commedia dell'arte in 18th century Russia. Anna Ioannovna's court, in particular, relished the boisterous vulgarity and coarse humour attributed to this genre.

A contemporary of Natália's and Smirnov's, and former student of the Kiev Academy, Feofan Prokopovich (1689-1736), composed a drama on an ecclesiastical theme, in the style of the church school plays. His work was concerned with contemporary events - praising the Tsar's military victories and his social reforms. The title of his tragi-comedy was Vladimir, Duke and Ruler of the Slavic Russian Land led by the Holy Ghost from the Darkness of Unbelief to Evangelical Light, in the Year 988 After the Birth of Christ.
In praising Vladimir's reforms and leadership qualities, the author leaves little doubt that he is campaigning for Peter I's westernization programme. The play is composed of two distinct parts, one tragic, the other comic - a combining of the morality play and the interlude. The latter part bears a close resemblance to its Italian and French counterparts.

Growing in popularity along with the amateur theatre, the interlude or intermezzo became a feature attraction during the first quarter of the 18th century, replacing the tedious morality plays which it was originally intended to animate. Two types of interlude were performed: that originally introduced into Russia from Poland and the native folk interlude. More sophisticated than its folk rival, the western interlude was edited by writers in the academies who modified it in order to better suit its new environment. The folk interlude, of purely Russian content and born spontaneously of folk art, was performed by roving Skomorokhi who, as we have seen, altered the content according to mood and situation. Sadikova makes the following assessment:

"Alongside the interlude of the school theatre, the interlude of the folk theatre played a significant role in the development of the Russian comedy. Between them it is necessary to distinguish two types of performance: those preserved in popular prints, interludes with the participation of idiotic characters (duratskikh person) and those preserved in the manuscripts of popular-farcical interludes in which the main character was the buffoon (Kherlekin, Gerlikin, Arlekin)"

As the school theatre interludes and those in Kunst's reper-
story had written texts, they likely had greater initial impact on the developing Russian comedy than did the oral folk interludes, which were not recorded until much later. A would-be dramatist had, in the written interlude, a ready made plot structure: he had only to fill in such details as he felt necessary to animate his play.

Interludes varied considerably: at times they were simple comic monologues, but often they appeared as minor independent plays, relatively complex in content and performed by two or three actors who maintained the constant character of the comic Masks. The 17th century interludes, often parodies on social vices, were aimed at the correction of contemporary manners and morals. When, however, the clergy came into range of their satire, enthusiasm for the interlude as an in-between-acts audience revitalizer promptly cooled. Skomorokhi were particularly ill-treated. Their secular, often irreverent performances provoked severe reaction from Tsar Aleksey Mikhailovich who, in 1645, ordered that all buffoons be punished and their masks burned. However, by the beginning of the 18th century the official attitude had changed considerably. By then the interlude had assumed much greater importance, adopting a topical social-political content, satirical in nature, but decidedly favouring the position of Tsar Peter I and the reformation.

The following is a resumé of an interlude preserved from the 18th century:
"Harlequin (i.e. Arlecchino) humbly submits to the petty court a report on behalf of a Siberian nobleman who complains that for a long time he suffers much abuse from flies, mosquitoes and other intrusive things; neither by day nor by night is there peace from them anywhere. The judge gives his verdict: that he (Harlequin) himself swat flies everywhere, not excluding them anywhere. Then Harlequin begins to beat the judge and the secretary pretending that he is killing flies that have settled on them." 17

Laughing all the while, Harlequin chases the judge and secretary off the stage. He obviously outwits his superiors, the judge and secretary, punishing them for their incompetence. The humiliation of the court officials parallels that often experienced by Pantalone and Dottore at the hands of Arlecchino. Here as in commedia dell'arte, Arlecchino, the servant, outmanoeuvres his master or his superiors.

In another such interlude, the master orders his servant to do only that which he writes in a memorandum. However the master, having fallen into a pit, calls for help and abuses the servant for not assisting him, but the servant retorts that this order was not in the memorandum. Interludes of this nature reached a wide audience at fairs, market places and festivals throughout Russia. 18

"...of all the early repertoire the interlude proved the most viable, and over a long period we see it revived repeatedly at fairs as entertainment for the crowds." 19

At the turn of the 17th century, concurrent with the rise of the interlude, the school theatres reached the apex of their popularity. It was during this period that
dramatic techniques were formulated. A significant contribution was made by the German director of the School Theatre of the Jesuits, Francis Lang (1654-1725). While in Germany, Lang compiled a book of regulations for actors called *A Dissertation About Acting* which was published posthumously in 1727. Lang based his dissertation on his knowledge and observations of *commedia dell'arte* as it was performed in Germany. Thus, in this book he departed from the prevailing norms of classical aesthetics, directing his attention to the external devices of acting - effective poses and pictorial gestures. This book was popular in the Russian school theatres during the first half of the 18th century. Its tenets exerted considerable influence on the quality and method of dramatic performance.

Although it is unlikely that Italian Masks performed in Russia before 1731, their presence was made known indirectly through the church school theatre interludes and through the secular comedies of Kunst's repertory. However, it is doubtful whether the comic characters of these interludes and comedies wore the traditional masks of *commedia dell'arte*. On the other hand, the comic personalities themselves (duratskie persony), sometimes their names, and often their costumes, as shown in portraits from that period, clearly identify them as relatives of the Italian Comic Masks. Of the Masks, Arlecchino was most commonly impersonated in the 17th century comedies and interludes. He was known as Arlekin, Kherlikin, Garlekin, or Gaer and often
traded roles with the Russian Petrushka.

On one occasion, according to Yu. A. Dmitriev, Italian Masks did perform before Russians, towards the end of the 17th century, when an Italian circus was on tour in Russia. The commedia dell'arte characters paraded before the Russian public in at least one other capacity, as members of a massive masquerade. From 1721 until Peter I's death, masquerades were organized annually, involving the participation of up to one thousand persons. Italian comics occupied a prominent role; their function was, undoubtedly, to provoke laughter along the masquerade route. Whether the characters impersonating the Masks were Italian or Russian is not determinable. Certainly, if Russians played these roles, then their knowledge of commedia dell'arte was far more comprehensive than is indicated by information contained in theatrical histories of that period. It is, therefore, worthwhile to look briefly at commedia dell'arte itself in order to determine its direct influence on the Russian theatre and especially its role in the development of original Russian comedy.
CHAPTER III

PART I - COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE

The first group of Italian comedians to perform in Russia arrived in time for the coronation ceremonies of Anna Ioannovna, in 1731. It brought to the Russians the renowned Italian improvised comedy with all the magnetic brilliance and vitality that had first delighted audiences in 16th century Italy and soon thereafter in the rest of Europe. Just what was commedia dell'arte? Where did it originate, and why does it figure so prominently in the development of Russian theatre?

The origins of this dynamic theatrical form are still very much under discussion. Attempts were made to link commedia dell'arte with ancient Roman mime or to see it as a direct descendant of comic characters in the medieval mystery plays. Modern critics tend to find commedia dell'arte motifs and figures in medieval folk literature, thereby supporting the theory that, during the Middle Ages an unpolished secular comedy may have existed side by side with the sacred representations until, in the 16th century with the rise of an actor class to a professional level, it suddenly gained momentum and burst forth as a genre in its own right.

Its unique and most essential feature was improvisation: having no set words to follow, the actors improvised on a previously studied skeleton plot, called a soggetto or scenario, which outlined the situations and events around which they were to weave dialogue. The action took
place between fixed character types, who varied only slightly from play to play. An actor almost always portrayed the same character, sometimes one which he himself had invented. Working with these stock types, commedia dell'arte relied heavily upon the improvisational ability of its actors to keep the plays fresh and alive.

Improvisation, therefore is the key word in any discussion of commedia dell'arte, and to a large extent moulded its acting methods. Obviously, however, no successful theatre could depend upon completely spontaneous action and dialogue. The degree to which a commedia dell'arte play could be improvised depended mainly upon the capability and imagination of its actors. As it was impractical to expect a consistently high standard of improvisation from a group of actors of varying abilities, there arose the necessity of organizing the action and of establishing set routines upon which the actors could rely.

There was, first of all, a firm plot structure, the scenario; a more or less standardized comic business, lazzi, as well as premeditated rhetorical material, concetti. The plot outline around which the actors performed, included the basic events of the play, the entrances and exits of the various characters. Almost anything could prove worthy material for a scenario: a short story, a folk tale, a written play from ancient or contemporary authors. All that was required was an opportunity for creating a comic situation.

Quite a number of scenario collections have come
down to us, three of which date back to the 17th century. The most famous is that of the actor-playwright, Flaminio Scala, *Teatro delle Favole rappresentative* (1611), consisting of 50 scenarios. Also extant are the collections of Basilio Locatelli (1620-30), containing 103 pieces, and that of Annibale Sersale, two volumes belonging to the end of the 16th century and including 183 scenarios.

Even with the aid of these collections, however, producers of *commedia dell'arte* plays were still faced with two major dilemmas— the vivification of the scenario and the maintenance of novelty. Success depended upon the skill of the director and the degree of sophistication in the improvisation of the actors. In a typical rehearsal procedure of the average company, the director or maestro as he was called, met with the actors and explained the plot to them in careful detail. His duty was to define the various characters, their names and situations, to outline the plot action, the entrances and exits of characters, to explain stage props and sets in relation to the plot and to determine where lazzos and conceits were needed.

After they understood the details of the plot, the actors rehearsed, perfecting a new lazzo or material of their own invention. They thought through their own parts, trying to fit in a prepared speech, a story, a local rumour, a fact which was applicable to this particular play but which was likely memorized and readily available for use in any play with a similar situation.
The actors naturally found it useful to collect series of speeches and stage tricks for the particular character they portrayed. In these collections of dialogues, jokes, outbursts of feeling, characterizations and soliloquies, grouped under such headings as first entrances, desperations, salutations and lazzos of every kind, one recognizes the personalities of the commedia dell'arte characters.

The lazzì more than any other stage technique gave an improvised play its uniqueness. Exactly what these lazzì were is difficult to determine. Often in the scenario they were either merely named, for example, "lazzo del tacere" and "lazzo del porco", or at a certain point in the scenario the directions would simply read "fanno lazzì". Obviously these pranks and jests were so familiar to the performers that the name sufficed to tell the actor what actions he should pursue. A modern critic describes a lazzo as "...a kind of comic play that today we might characterize as slap-stick comedy". They were, in other words, simple stage tricks employed most often by the zanni or buffoons, to enliven a scene by evoking unsophisticated laughter. Although lazzì stood outside the mainstream of the plot, they served to give it continuity and lightness of tone. As such, they constituted a vital part of an improvised comedy.

Before theatrical production methods had developed much in Italy, the early commedia dell'arte plays were performed on stages that were merely collapsible platforms, boxes or booths (one recalls the Skomorokhi and the Vertep) which could
easily be packed and carried in the wagons used by the wandering bands of actors to travel from place to place. As these plays did not require elaborate decorations, or complicated scenery, they could be, and in fact were, performed anywhere an audience would gather together to watch them: in a hall, in a market place or a main piazza. The height of the stage was level with the eyes of the spectators to facilitate a good view for all. At the back of the stage hung a canvas on which was painted the scene of a town's square with two or three streets leading away from it.

As commedia dell'arte and the theatre in general gained more popularity and support, a more sophisticated and often permanent stage was constructed. The most common was a form of amphitheatre with a platform in the front and a setting of three streets or arcades leading off, as in the earlier canvas. At first the only stage props, ruled by necessity, were portable and inexpensive: a bench, a table, a trunk, a basket of flowers. Later, when groups of actors were supported by wealthy patrons, they were able to make use of this patronage by borrowing what they required. Still later, the invention of fake stage props enabled a company of actors to own many inexpensive, yet real-looking props to assist in creating effects.

The material which commedia dell'arte used as plots for its own performances was often derived from the contemporary Erudite or written comedies. In these plays appeared the situations and characters which improvised comedy was to
stereotype. In taking plots from the Erudite comedy, *commedia dell'arte* was inheriting the classical theories and comic situations which had been the basis for Renaissance comedy. However, *commedia dell'arte* did not feel bound to accept these classical aesthetics as law. With wonderful dexterity, it moulded and adapted what it took to suit its own specific purpose. Because it was able to assimilate anything theatrical, it found inspiration not only in the learned written comedies, but also in the popular farces and *contrasti*, in the acrobatic and mime shows of the piazza.

The main feature of the plots of improvised plays is intrigue and a resulting comic situation. The subject of the intrigue is the love affair between a young couple who, although impeded by their parents, are encouraged by the conning servants. These lower class comic figures often form a sub-plot parodying the serious characters and intensifying the comic effect.

The *dramatis personae* are divided into two categories: the comic and the serious. These categories are clearly defined and each character stays within his definitive boundaries. Their actions are predictable, their character static. They have one or two outstanding traits, such as miserliness, cunning, or gullibility. Much could, therefore, be taken for granted in a *commedia dell'arte* performance, as the characters were already established, eliminating the need to define the various roles. The actors simply presented themselves on stage and immediately recalled in the minds of the spectators
the entire range of lazzii, tirades and gestures already traditional for that particular character. As the principal characters wore masks, their facial expressions, therefore, remaining constant, the mobility of their bodies attained a special importance. As a result, a series of characteristic gestures and body poses evolved which constitute a language in themselves. (This new theatrical language was readily accepted by actors throughout Europe, Russia included.)

Two of the important traditional characters of commedia dell'arte are Pantalone and Dottore, representatives of the older generation. Pantalone is an old Venetian merchant, a rich retired businessman, a severe father of one of the lovers, or occasionally a bachelor. Although he is essentially good-natured, a quick temper and irrationality often overcome him. He is given to garrulousness and when excited or angered, blusters incoherently in his native Venetian dialect. Both his simple personality and his comical pot-bellied figure make him the perfect butt for the relentless pranks of the servants, and evoke a sympathetic response from the audience. However, his disgusting tantrums, his strutting and his pretense to youthfulness dilute this reaction, thereby maintaining the comic perspective.

Dottore, the second old man, comes from one of Italy's early developed cultural centres, Bologna. Generally, he represents a lawyer, although often a physician or a mixture of astrologer, grammarian, philosopher and wit. A bombastic pedant, he comically certifies his glib utterances on
academic matters with solemn, pompous and misconstrued quotations in Latin. Dottore considers himself a model of wisdom, maturity and rationality while he is actually devoid of these qualities: he is easily deceived and outwitted by the younger characters and by the servants.

The most important of the Masks are the zanni, or buffoons. They play the role of servant or confidant to either Pantalone or Dottore or to one of the serious characters. Besides plot weaving, their task is to provoke laughter by slapstick, pantomime, acrobatics, exaggeration or gimmickry. The zanni's character reflects a duality: he is both an astute and clever servant, promoting the intrigue of the plot, and a gullible, simple servant, a bungler whose ridiculous remarks and actions arouse much mirth.

Arlecchino, the most popular and widely known of the zanni, plays the role of valet. Everyone knows him from the cat-like expression of his mask, his motley coloured clothes and the wooden sword in his belt. On stage he exhibits a keen wit, acrobatic prowess and a talent for instigating intrigues which appear destined for certain disaster. However, at the crucial moment, an unexpected event saves Arlecchino from the impending unhappy situation. Of the zanni, Arlecchino, Harlequin to us, became the most popular outside Italy, especially in France, where he evolved into Pierrot, a character not unlike the Russian Petrushka.

Columbina, the female counterpart of Arlecchino and the object of his amorous desires, plays servant to the
Inamorata. She adds to the main intrigue and is usually part of a subordinate love affair, parodying that of the Inamorati. Although often selfishly ambitious, she displays a lightheartedness, an ability to forgive easily and a consistent loyalty and affection for the mistress she serves. She developed along with Arlecchino into such characters as Harlequine and Pierrette.

Brighella is a caricature of the devilish rogue and cowardly villain who would do anything for money. Devoid of conscience, he maliciously provokes those weaker than he, but when threatened by a superior force, prudently withdraws. He usually plays the role of a cook, and sometimes that of a valet.

The Inamorati, the young lovers, are son and daughter to Dottore and Pantalone. The only characters who go unmasked, they are the non-comic persons around which the action revolves. Fashionably dressed and fine featured, they are kept apart by parents who seek wealthy marriage partners for them. However, their own unfailing devotion plus the maneuvering of their servants conquers the evil schemes of their parents. The traditional commedia dell'arte play ends with wedding festivities at which the zanni entertain actors and audience alike.

A host of other characters besides those mentioned have earned respectable places within the realm of improvised comedy. The above basic personalities were selected merely in order to refresh the reader's memory and to bring to light sufficient facts to facilitate the investigation of the direct
influence this comic genre had on the basic structure and development of 18th century Russian comedy.

PART II - THE MASKS AT ANNA IOANNOVNA'S COURT

The direct influence of commedia dell'arte on Russian theatre commenced with the arrival in Russia in 1731 of a troupe of Italian comedians and singers. The company, led by maestro compositore Reinhard Kaiser and comic actor Tomaso Ristori, opened in February with a play entitled A Comedy with Singing. Having succumbed to her predilection for buffoonery, Empress Anna Ioannovna made arrangements with August II, King of Poland, to have this company, which for several years had entertained his court, sent to Moscow in time for her coronation festivities.

From their very first appearance, the Italians knew nothing but success. Their engagement lasted about a year and upon their departure, a new troupe was summoned, only this time directly from Italy. At the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg, in a room specially constructed by Anna's architect, Count Bartolomeo Rastrelli, the company performed almost exclusively the traditional commedia dell'arte. As the Empress did not know Italian, she made Academician Shtelin responsible for composing short librettos in German which were then translated into
In Russia by the poet Tredyakovsky.

During their three-year stay in Russia, the Italian comedians performed at least thirty-nine works, preserved in a collection published by V. Peretis. In 1733, they presented fourteen comedies and three interludes with music; in 1734, twelve comedies and five interludes; and in 1735, four comedies and one tragedy.

"By means of this collection (thirty-nine plays in the commedia dell'arte genre) it is possible to establish that the Russian public became acquainted with Arlecchino in the early 30's of the 18th century. The dramatis personae of the comedies were: Arlecchino, Smeraldina, later replaced by Columbina, Brighella - in the roles of knaves, Pantalone and Dottore - in the roles of comic old men, Silvio, Eduardo, Diana and Aurelia - in the roles of the lovers."

This critic, S. K. Shambinago, continues, saying that the popularity of the Italian comedy created such a deep impression that even up to the present day, Arlecchino and Columbina appear on stage. As mentioned above, Russians had become acquainted with Arlecchino much earlier through the church school theatre interludes and in the German repertory. The other Masks were less commonly known prior to 1731.

Why the great success of Italian commedia dell'arte in 18th century Russia? In the words of Lo Gatto, the state of moral decadence at Anna's court resulted in the audience showing a preference for the often vulgar performances of jugglers and actors who could improvise on themes. Shambinago adds that the success of commedia dell'arte was due to the enthusiasm Russians had for improvised musical comedy.
The diluted imitations of commedia dell'arte, which had preceded the Italians into Russia via the church school theatre interludes and the secular comedies of Kunst's repertory (and even the Russian folk tradition) also played their part in directing special attention to the Comedy of Masks when it finally appeared in its original brilliance. Furthermore, because the Italian comic actors were such excellent mimics, the spectators had little difficulty following their comic antics and, therefore, the expected reliance on language was effectively minimized.

The comic genre itself, with its outstanding qualities — humour, vitality, variety — so attractive to Western Europeans a century earlier, exercised a similar hypnotic effect on Russians, who were by now looking for a dynamic theatrical form which could stimulate interest and encourage developments leading toward the establishment of a Russian national theatre.

By the time Italian comics appeared at Anna's court theatre, a great many Russians were already well prepared to accept a completely secular theatre, now that the stifling cloak of Orthodox morality had been essentially discarded. The coarse humour and lively music offered by the comic masks was voraciously enjoyed by a Russian public which craved secular entertainment. The commedia dell'arte trick of involving the audience in their play won approval. The introduction into the lazzi of local personalities and events familiar to the audience intensified interest and humour — an attribute lacking in the inflexible written comedy.

Due to the consistency of the commedia dell'arte form,
its audience, after one or two performances, could readily recognize the comic personalities and situations in which they were involved. As a result, the cultural-linguistic gap, a major problem in written comedy, was narrowed, making improvised comedy more easily understood and enjoyed. The utilization of standard comic situations focused responsibility for production of effective comedy on the acting ability of the Masks: as these comic situations were predictable from scene to scene, the manner in which the Masks manipulated and improvised on them to evoke laughter was all-important. The acrobatics, gymnastics and mime employed by the Masks, which added zest to the comic business, had a particular attraction for Russians. Their energetic folk dances and folk comedies display a generous quantity of these same characteristics.

The novelty to Russian audiences of the traditional commedia dell'arte love theme was undoubtedly another attractive feature. This theme is almost completely absent from pre-18th century Russian folk literature. It was first introduced from the West during the latter half of the 17th century by means of the short story. However, it took the Italians at Anna's court theatre to present a love theme with a flourish. The provocative, often risqué amorous intrigues central to commedia dell'arte must certainly have stirred the imagination of the relatively naive Russian viewer. The interference of the parents, Pantalone and Dottore, in the happiness of their offspring, the Innamorati, surely evoked the audience's indignation. The pre-arranged marriage, a common practice in Russia, was among the first
subjects satirized by early Russian dramatists.

Of the Italians coming to 18th century Russia, the Neapolitan composer-conductor, Francesco Araia, was the most important because of the example his vast repertoire gave Russian audiences and writers, and because he opened the doors of Russian theatres to other Italian performers. Araia first attracted the attention of Anna's court with his opera *Amore per regnare* which had its premiere in Rome in 1734. At the court's invitation, the maestro arrived in St. Petersburg in 1735, with a thirty-five member opera company and ballet led by Antonio Renaldo Fossano and his wife, Gulia Cortesi; the stage scenery for their productions was designed by a Bolognese architect, Giovanni Buon. For twenty years Araia's compositions dominated the Russian entertainment scene and had a considerable impact on the development of opera and theatre.

During the course of his lengthy stay in Russia, Araia composed a variety of works: *La Forza dell'amor e dell'odio* (translated by Tredjakovsky and performed in 1736), *Semiramide* (from the libretto of Pietro Metastasio, 1738), *Alessandro in India* (also from a libretto of Metastasio, 1743), *Scipione* (1745), *Bellerofonte* (1750), *L'incoronazione di Eudosia e Teodeosio II* (1751), *Antigone* (1757), *Didone Abbandonata* (from the libretto of Metastasio, 1758), *Ifigenia in Tauride* (1758) and others. Araia's *Cefalo e Proci* deserves a place of its own among his works. According to Lo Gatto, it was based on a libretto by A. Sumarokov, was sung completely by Russians and was first published in Russia.
Under the directorship of Araia, Italian music and opera became firmly secured in the hearts of Russia's theatre goers, but its popularity was strongly contested by the picturesque Italian comedies and interludes that accompanied Araia. Concerning the success of Araia's company, M. Slonim remarks:

"The Italians brought with them, among other things, the commedia dell'arte with its improvisations and masks; they impressed the spectators with their elaborate sets, machines, and various technical tools. They greatly enhanced the stagecraft in Russia, and their Giovanni Buon, an architect from Bologna, was acclaimed as the master of his trade." 6

Commedia dell'arte may not have been the main feature of Araia's company; however, the fact that the great maestro met with such success in Russia attracted other well-known persons, such as A. Sacchi and G. Locatelli, and a large number of lesser comic artists who discovered a vast new audience in the Russian public. As Shambinago points out:

"Italian spectacles performed on amateur stages, the participation of educational institutions in the support of the theatre arts, gradually exposed the cultural significance of theatre." 7

While Italian comics performed for the public, Russians were assisting Italian productions for the court theatre. Performances of the stature of Araia's musical compositions required a large number of participants which made it necessary to recruit the services of native Russians. The obvious choice for this task was the Cadet Corps of St. Petersburg. Their association with Araia was an invaluable experience: while working with the Italian artists, the cadets had ample opportunity to
study and learn the sophisticated Italian acting and staging tech-
niques.

The young men who first participated in the mass scenes
of Araia's operas were destined to be the core of Russia's Na-
tional Theatre. One of the youthful participants was Alexander
Sumarokov, who joined the Corps in 1732. Sumarokov later became
Russia's first professional dramatist and had his first play,
Khorev, staged by this same Cadet Corps in 1747.

Although the Cadet Corps performed effectively in its
supporting role in the operas and musicals, according to Shambi-
nago, its debut in the theatrical life of Russia began with the
Italian intermezzo which it staged with Araia's co-operation.
The theatre craft which the Cadets were required to learn in
order to perform intermezzi must certainly have influenced their
artistic approach to future comic productions. The Corps' to-
tal experience with Araia and his company obviously provided some
of its members with the materials and the incentive with which to
become the first professional actors, dramatists and theatre
technicians in Russia. A decade after its introduction to Araia,
the Corps produced its first play written by a native Russian.

The unexpected success of the Cadets prompted their
dance instructor, J. B. Landet, to organize a corps de ballet in
1738. Thus an important step was taken toward the creation of
an Imperial theatrical school, which followed several years later.

The leader of the Corps, Prince Yusupov, a man of in-
fluence at the court, was able to petition for its needs and main-
tain a strong artistic organization. No doubt stimulated by the
commedia dell'arte performances, the prince was responsible for organizing dilettante spectacles, staged mostly in the homes of influential people. These amateur performances prompted both the expansion of amateur theatre and its development away from foreign imitation toward a more original form.

During the decade (1731-1741) of complete domination of commedia dell'arte on the Russian stage, activities in the native theatre were accelerated: people were no longer content to sit in the wings, but now were interested in taking an active part. Native actors became more abundant; they assisted the Italian professionals with comic productions and worked in amateur theatres which were also rapidly increasing in number. Thus, in the shadow of commedia dell'arte, the early Russian theatre was stimulated to a degree it had never before experienced. The total effect of the Italians and their comedies on Russian theatre cannot be definitively determined due to a scarcity of information about that period. However, it was sufficiently strong to secure Italian comedy a favoured position at court and the public stage for the remainder of the century, during the reign of Elizabeth Petrovna and Catherine II.
PART III - COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE AND THE RUSSIAN NATIONAL THEATRE

When Peter I's daughter, Elizabeth Petrovna assumed responsibilities of the imperial throne in 1741, she was greeted by a grandiose Italian spectacle, including an opera by Pietro Metastasio:

"...Italians staged in 1742, for the festivities of Yelisaveta's coronation in Moscow, the opera La Clemenza di Tito, accompanied by a spectacular prologue with dances, music, and recitation, all under the title Russia, Afflicted and Consoled which attracted thousands of spectators. The whole show was an artistic 'apotheosis of the Empress.'"

The involvement of Italian players in the coronation festivities attests to their importance and popularity at the Russian court and to the likelihood of Italian comedy continuing to attract interest in other social spheres. However, by this time the Italians no longer occupied the Russian stage unchallenged. A prominent French company, a German company and later a Viennese ballet came to Russia to amuse the court with productions of both western classic theatre and French and German imitations of commedia dell'arte.

Under Elizabeth's patronage, the theatre was given the opportunity and encouragement it needed to develop and expand. In 1750, the Empress signed an Imperial order authorizing performances in private houses. At the palace theatre performances, she expected her entire entourage to be present and also invited prominent members of the merchant class, provided they were suitably dressed!

Talented young people in theatre were encouraged and
often supported by the court treasury. Attracted by rumours of Imperial generosity, artists from all over Russia and from the West converged on St. Petersburg in the hope of winning the recognition and favour of the court.

Elizabeth Petrovna's most noteworthy contribution to the theatre was the formation of Russia's first national theatre, whose existence she ensured with the support of the court treasury. Elizabeth was interested in improving and enriching the cultural stature of her court, bringing it up to the level of sophistication and splendour enjoyed by western monarchs. The theatre, therefore, occupied the focal point in her plans and, as a result, reached a new degree of refinement. Almost immediately arrangements were made to employ Italian and French troupes to animate courtly functions.

Having heard that A. Sumarokov's play, Khorev, was being performed by the Cadet Corps, she invited them to her court in 1750 for the first in a series of presentations and was impressed by their skill. In the same year, a group of native actors staged a comedy at the house of a merchant in Yaroslavl. Always alert to recognize Russian talent, Elizabeth, attracted by this group from Yaroslavl, which was headed by the Volkov brothers, Fyodor and Grigory, invited them to court. Their performance of The Repentance of a Sinner by Dimitry, Metropolitan of Rostov, in 1752, was so well liked that some of the actors from Volkov's group were given the opportunity to further their education at the Academy for the Nobility (the Petersburg Cadet Corps). As an additional reward, the Yaroslavl actors remained in the court's
employ and formed the basis for the first native company in the history of Russian theatre.

By mid-century, the way was prepared for formal legislation which would officially create the first national theatre: Sumarokov had written and produced his first play, the Yaroslavl actors had received recognition at court, and the Cadet Corps, benefitting from its association with Araia, had gained popularity. On August 30, 1756 Elizabeth Petrovna issued the following edict:

"For the performances of tragedies and comedies, we have now ordered the inauguration of a Russian theatre for which the Golovin stone house, on the Vasilyevsky Island, near the Cadets building, shall be assigned. For the said theatre we have issued an order to engage actors and actresses: actors from among choir boys and the Yaroslavl residents studying at the Corps of Cadets, such as may be required, and, in addition to these, actors from among other private people, as well as an appropriate number of actresses...." 9

The Yaroslavl actors formed the core of the theatre; their leader, Fyodor Grigoryevich Volkov (1729-1763) assumed a prominent role in its direction.

The son of a Kostroma merchant, Volkov studied unceasingly, gaining early in life, an exceptionally broad and thorough knowledge of languages and the arts. Theatre historians credit him with the ability to perform equally well in comedies and in tragedies. According to V. Vsevolodsky-Gerngross, he could sing in Italian and was acquainted with Italian acting methods:

"F. Volkov was able to perform in operatic presentations...he played well on the clavichord and sang Italian operatic arias.... Remember what N. Novikov and A. Malinovsky
Volkov, indeed, had a working knowledge of Italian: he translated from the Italian Titovo Miloserdiya (libretto by P. Metastasio, music by Araia) and presented it on opening night at the Yaroslavl theatre. Evidently, Volkov's first acquaintance with foreign theatre was with the performances of Italians. In Petersburg on a business trip, he apparently spent his leisure hours attending the theatre and the Italian opera; he was greatly impressed by what he saw. Making his way back stage, he sketched the sets and stage plans. These details he certainly transferred to his theatre in Yaroslavl. Obviously, while leading comic presentations at his theatre, Volkov would have recalled his experiences with commedia dell'arte. Nor did he fail to include the comic masks in the famous masquerade which he organized and directed for the benefit of Catherine II's coronation. Murals depicting the occasion show performing jugglers and masked comedians who are identifiable as the stock characters of commedia dell'arte.

During the illustrious reign of Empress Elizabeth, numerous Italian companies appeared on the Russian court and public stages, performing their opere buffe, intermezzi and scenati. The great 18th century Italian actor, Antonio Sacchi, for whom the renowned playwrights Carlo Goldoni and Carlo Gozzi wrote, was among the celebrities who delighted Russian theatre-goers. In 1742, suddenly leaving the San Samuele theatre in Venice, Sacchi and half of his theatrical troupe went to Russia and stayed there
until 1745. Sacchi's company performed for the court and before the populace of Petersburg and Moscow, creating a tremendous stir in appreciation of its comic creations.

Famous for his portrayal of Truffaldino (a variation of the Zanni, Arlecchino), Sacchi with his company contributed a great deal to the popularization of *commedia dell'arte* with the general public and in theatrical circles. Part of his repertory was composed of works by Goldoni, who, a decade later, became famous throughout Russia for his libretti and his comic plays. In his study of Goldoni's works in Russia, N. Mangini comments:

"Come e accaduto anche in altri paesi, Carlo Goldoni in Russia è stato conosciuto prima di tutto come librettista di drammi giocosi per musica. Nel repertorio delle opere buffe eseguite a Pietroburgo e a Mosca da artisti italiani, tra il 1755 e il 1760, troviamo, infatti, numerose libretti goldoniani, come *Il Mondo della Luna*, *Il Filosofo di campagna*, *L'Arcadia in Brenta*, *I Bagni d'Abano* e altri. Ma come commediografo è molto probabile che il nome del Goldoni sia stato fatto conoscere prima di tutto dal famoso 'truffaldino' Antonio Sacchi, che nei suoi diversi giri per le città di tutta Europa non dovette certo mancare di rappresentare quegli scenati che l'autore veneziano aveva composto espressamente per lui, da *Le trentadue disgrazie di Arlecchino* a *Il Servitore di due padroni.*" 14

While Sacchi was still playing in Russia, Renaldo Fossano, formerly Araia's ballet master, returned to Petersburg, after six years absence, with some of the best artists of Italian ballet, including Tordo, Signora Columba and Fabiani and his wife. Fossano's troupe rivaled the serious ballet, staged in the French manner by Lande, with comic ballet performances in which he was supported by native Russian dancers.

When Fossano retired, he was replaced by Giovan Battista
Locatelli, one of the greatest impresarios of his day, who arrived in St. Petersburg in 1757. E. Lo Gatto remarks:

"Venne il periodo di successo del Locatelli e dei suoi collaboratori, specialmente di Giovanni Sacco, delle sue due sorelle Libera e Andreina, di sua moglie Conti e del signor Belluzzi." 15

His repertoire included both serious and comic opera and ballet. Performances of Locatelli's comic operas reached a wide cross-section of the Petersburg-Moscow citizenry:

"From 1757 in Petersburg, and from 1759 in Moscow, Locatelli's troupe began performing Italian comic operas; being in the position of the court troupe, it also gave public spectacles. The comic opera rivaled the serious opera of the court and was its dangerous competitor. It experienced tremendous success with a large portion of the public." 16

Obviously, these Italian comic operas caught the interest of Russian dramatists due to this genre's simplicity and popularity. Locatelli's unquestionable success resulted in the appearance on the Russian scene of a multitude of less skilled Italian actors. Thus, Russia was virtually invaded by comic performers.

Italian companies were not alone in the performing of commedia dell'arte. German companies in Russia during Elizabeth's reign also staged comedies based on interpretations of the Italian improvised comedy:

"The repertory of the German troupes continued along the lines familiar to us already during the Petrine epoch, but with a strong readjustment toward the Italian comedy. Arlecchino and illustrious transformations captured the centre of attention of the unpretentious audience." 17

Molière's comedies as performed by French troupes, beginning in 1743, were living examples of commedia dell'arte transformed into
conventional written comedy.

Native Russian actors gradually took a more active role in theatre. They produced translations and adaptations of Italian, French and German works together with the first creative efforts of their own dramatists. Hoping to encourage such talent, Elizabeth suggested that budding artists compose interludes using as their theme the controversial landlord-peasant conflict. Sumarokov as author-actor, F. Volkov as actor-producer and I. A. Dmitrevsky as Russia's first outstanding actor figured prominently in these early and important theatrical accomplishments.

The encouragement and assistance of the Empress, the ingenuity of artists of Volkov's stature, and the general enthusiasm for theatre was responsible for putting Russian theatre on a firm footing. Native talent was plentiful enough in the cultural centres to facilitate the establishing of a national theatre manned completely by Russians. During the course of these formative years, Italian artists had held a favoured position at court and on the public stage. Their comedies, opera and music had won the admiration of all. Italian comedians had been principal performers in Russia for 20 years prior to the establishment of the Russian National Theatre and they continued in that capacity for another 50 years. As their presence coincided with important achievements in Russian theatre itself, a fertile collaboration between Russian amateur and Italian professional artists seems entirely credible: in other words, Italian comic performances did influence the mode of acting, the staging, the producing and writing of Russian comedies. The effects of this col-
laboration come into clearer focus during the next period, Russia's Enlightenment, under the patronage of Catherine II, when Russian dramatists began creating original comedies.

PART IV - COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE AND THE RUSSIAN COMEDY

The theatre flourished during the reign of Empress Catherine II (1762–1796). Having been energized during the preceding 30 years, theatre expanded its sphere of influence to include all levels of society. In the Imperial theatre, the tempo of activity increased while the grandeur of the spectacles knew no bounds. Provincial theatres were being established in various centres throughout Russia. The serf theatre became the rage: wealthy noblemen, in an attempt to imitate the splendid court theatre, imposed new cultural duties upon their serfs, forcing them to be both artists on stage and toilers in the field. The great increase in theatres and the consequent growth in the number of trained actors created a demand for plays of Russian origin. Accepting the challenge, talented Russians energetically began writing and producing what were at first merely translations and adaptations of foreign works. Later, however, they gradually broke free of their imitative enslavement and created works of genuine originality.

Many Russian writers of comedy turned to commedia dell'arte for plots, character types and comic effects. The basic
comic elements in *commedia dell'arte* scenarios are neatly packaged. Dramatists saw a subject matter, a plan of action and a roster of character types in the Comedy of Masks that readily suited their creative needs. Into the basic plot sketch it was natural to interweave elements of their own folk culture and satire on contemporary conditions. As an indication of their success, by the end of the 18th century a prominent owner of serf theatres, Count Sheremetyev, had in his library 250 Russian plays, printed or in manuscript.

Despite the expansive developments in Russian theatre, artists from Western Europe continued to be the main attraction with the nobility and the general public partly because foreign spectacles were more fashionable; they were more attractive simply because they were foreign and because the calibre of performance, in most instances, was still superior to the native efforts.

Besides the regular *commedia dell'arte* repertory, Italian players were now performing Carlo Goldoni's comedies, while Russians were attempting to stage them in translation. Although it is very probable that Antonio Sacchi produced Goldoni's comedies as early as 1742, the first definite indication that his comedies were being performed in Russia is a translation of *Bourru bienfaisant* by Mikhail Chrapovitsky which was published in Peterburg in 1772. Other Goldoni comedies translated and likely performed both by Italians and Russians were: *I Puntigli domestici* (1773), *Il Bugiardo* (1774), *Il vero amico* (1795) and *Il Servitore di due padroni*, an adaptation in verse by M. P. Galperin (1796).
A contemporary of Carlo Goldoni, the poet and dramatist, Pietro Metastasio, lived and wrote at both Elizabeth's and Catherine's court. The librettos for comic operas which he wrote while in Russia received an enthusiastic welcome at the Imperial theatre.

The presence at court of such a celebrated literary personality favourably affected the position of Italian comic entertainment in Russia. The Italian *opera buffa* gained particular popularity and consequently a wide influence. Introduced into Russia by the Italian troupes that animated the court of Anna Ioannovna, this gay light-hearted genre reached the zenith of its popularity during the 1770's.

Comic opera represented an artistic improvement over the *intermezzo*; the dramatic structure of the comic opera is more completely developed and supported by a musical score. The plot became more distinct and the role of the actor more intricate. The dramatis personae were required, besides acting, to sing simple songs and to perform simple dances.

Promise of immediate success enticed young writers to test their skills with the popular comic opera. As a result, many first attempts were made in this genre and served to provide the dramatists with the materials and experience with which they could eventually reach a more original realistic comedy.

During the latter part of the century, the development of comic opera proceeded via two distinct routes. The eminent dramatists of the gentry wrote in an accusatory-realistic manner. To this category belong the comic operas of such writers
as Popov, Kniazhnin and Krylov. The other direction was pursued by the conservative writers of the nobility (including Catherine II) who either idealized the harsh realities of Russian serfdom or deprived the comic opera of any significant subject matter. 19

Although Russian comic opera was quite varied in content, its attention was directed mainly toward the depiction of peasant life. The comic opera, which derived its form from improvised comedy, followed its example by adapting the traditional commedia dell'arte master-servant relationship to a local interchange between landlord and peasant.

Russian artists wrote and produced a great number of comedies and comic operas between 1760 and the end of the century. The public, especially outside the court theatre, applauded them enthusiastically. Not only were the comedies written in the native tongue, but also the content was Russian, enabling the spectator to grasp quickly the subtleties and nuances.

This creative period of theatre was actually initiated a decade earlier by Alexander Petrovich Sumarokov (1717-1777). However, he experienced difficulty in producing his plays because of the lack of competent Russian actors and therefore ceased his work after 1751. With the debut of a company of Russian actors in 1756, this problem was eliminated and, in 1758, Sumarokov resumed his dramatic writing.

A successful writer of comedies, Sumarokov produced two such works in 1750: Tresotinius and The Monster. However, few of his comedies exhibited originality; they were either
adaptations or imitations of Moliere's works - The Dowry by Fraud, The Cuckold: Through Imagination, A Petty Quarrel, The Querulous Woman and others. Sumarokov, however, was also well acquainted with the Italian Comedy of Masks in its original 16th century form: he attended performances of the first Italian troupes in Russia:

"...as a student of the Cadet Corps, he was able to acquaint himself with the lively, diversified dialogue of the repertory of commedia dell'arte that was being performed." 20

Sumarokov's familiarity with commedia dell'arte and his predilection for Moliere together determined the style and quality of his comic works.

A. Sumarokov deserves recognition for being the first professional playwright in Russia to create dramas that tended toward originality and also for being the motivating force behind dilettante actors, stage directors and writers who, as a result of his initial successes and encouragement, thrust themselves whole-heartedly into artistic careers in the theatre.

Other writers that followed in Sumarokov's wake were better, more original craftsmen. The distinctive feature of the work of V. I. Lukin (1737-1794) is that it represents a transition from imitation of foreign models to the creation of new comedy. Realizing that it was not realistic for characters with foreign names to be speaking and behaving as Russians, Lukin made a concerted effort to eliminate foreignisms from his comedies. He was also among the first to incorporate into his work the language characteristic of the middle class and the peasantry, but like those of Sumarokov, his comedies still
suffered from didacticisms.

Lukin's campaign against foreign imitation was more vigorously and fervently espoused by the actor-playwright, Peter Aleksyevich Plavilshchikov (1760-1812):

"We have filled our theatre with either imitations or translations which not only do not elevate it, but keep it enslaved and make it crawl before the originals of these translations...." 21

The comedy most representative of his work is The Store Clerk, in which the action develops around a satirical expose of the merchant class. The plot is described as follows:

"The merchant's virtuous clerk, overcoming many obstacles, marries the boss's daughter who, for a while, has been threatened with a marriage to a repulsive rich man." 22

The above described situation possesses remarkable resemblance to a multitude of commedia dell'arte scenarios which were performed in Russia in the original and also in translation.

Plavilshchikov's comedy is considered the prototype for The Fashion Shop, written by his contemporary, Krylov, and for Poverty Is No Disgrace, by the well-known 19th century dramatist, Ostrovsky. The plot structure and development in these plays display considerable similarity with commedia dell'arte where servants, their masters, heroes and heroines become involved in intricate and hopeless love affairs that unexpectedly and happily sort themselves out in the end. Plavilshchikov strove to represent life as realistically as possible and, in so doing, placed himself in the vanguard of the movement toward Russian dramatic realism.

... A position of respect among the outstanding play-
wrights of the 18th century belongs to Denis Ivanovich Fonvizin (1744-1792). In two of his best works, The Brigadier (Brigadir) and The Minor (Nedorosl'), Fonvizin used to good effect a device from the Comedy of Masks: contrasting the action and traits of paired characters. Hence, the Masks, Pantalone and Dottore, are equivalent to Fonvizin's Brigadiere and Sovyetnik. The interactions of these characters and their wives remind the reader of scenes from scenarios of the improvised comedies. In The Minor, this device is less evident, however, the servants reflect characteristics of the zanni - they appear more clever than their patrons. Furthermore, the character of Starodum is reminiscent of the pompous Dottore of commedia dell'arte.

These and other notable 18th century Russian dramatists, keen observers of life, discovered themselves in the midst of an infinite abundance of material which they sought to recreate in their dramatic compositions. Coupled with careful observations and study of foreign models at hand, these Russian writers were able to better organize their own experiences into forceful and meaningful comic presentations. Their satirical treatment of social injustices and of the lack of respect for traditional human ethics had a purpose in common with commedia dell'arte which employed a simple, but effective method for propagating social criticism. Relying, therefore, on a combination of basic elements originally developed by Italian comedians and the substance of their own culture, Russian playwrights captured the attention of world theatre.

Commedia dell'arte continued to penetrate Russian drama-
turgy with increasing impact. In certain dramatists it left a very clear impression. I mentioned the name Plavilshchikov in this connection, but the influence of commedia dell'arte was reflected in the works of other dramatists of this period, in particular, in the comedies of Ya. B. Knyazhnin and I. A. Krylov. Therefore my objectives for the following two chapters shall be to investigate this phenomenon in selected comic works of these two playwrights.

Both authors opened their dramatic careers by writing comic operas: Krylov with *The Coffee-mill* (*Kofeynitsa*, 1788) and Knyazhnin with *The Unfortunate Coach* (*Neschastie ot Karety*, 1779). However, both also succeeded in writing satirical comedies that survived the test of theatrical production and represented a real advance for 18th century Russian comedy.
Ya. B. Knyazhnin made his literary debut in 1769 with a publication of a translation from Italian called *Zapiski istorio-graficheskie o Moreye, o tsarstve Negropontskom i prochikh bliz le-zhashchikh mestakh*. For a decade (the 1770's) he was the only translator of Italian literature of any significance, and managed to make a living at it.\(^1\) This venture coupled with his observations of Italian stage productions left its mark on Knyazhnin's comedies. Underscoring this contention, B. V. Neyman remarks in his discussion of Knyazhnin's comic works that the comedy in his plays is based not on the text, but exclusively on the acting of the dramatic personae.\(^2\) Dependence on gesture and motion for comic effect, a device used by the Comic Masks as early as the 16th century, is particularly evident in *Chudaki* (*The Eccentrics*), to a lesser extent in *Khvastun* (*The Braggart*) and *Neschastye ot karety* (*Misfortune from a Coach*).

By the end of the 70's, Knyazhnin had turned from translating to creative writing and prepared his first original comic opera, *Neschastye ot karety* (1779). Considered one of his best dramatic works, it exerted considerable influence on early Russian comedy. It endorses the peasant-theme tradition adopted from Italian and French writers and introduced to Russian comic opera by M. I. Popov's *Anyuta* (1772). With *Misfortune from a Coach*, Knyazhnin improved considerably on Popov's first attempt to typify peasant life, customs and language. Whereas Popov's *Anyuta* was written mainly for the sake of comedy, Knyazhnin's comic opera
expresses a sincere sympathy for the serfs. Although first to point out the hopeless plight of the serfs, Misfortune from a Coach is above all a gay, witty comedy in which the author does not attempt a penetrating analysis of the protagonists, but instead draws a grotesquely comical portrait of an ignorant, capricious landowner who is ruining the lives of his serfs by selling them into the army in order that he may buy the latest French coach. In contrast to the landowner and his bailiff, the serfs are sympathetically represented as warm-hearted, intelligent people upon whom the parasitic landowner is totally dependent.

The sequence of events in Misfortune from a Coach keeps pace with the usual order of developments in commedia dell'arte. The theme traces a conflict involving a blackguard bailiff, Klementi, and a benevolent young peasant, Luk'yan, antagonists in love with Anyuta, a pretty serf on the Firiulin estate. On the day of Luk'yan and Anyuta's marriage, Firiulin orders Klementii to round up and sell some serfs as he wishes to purchase a new carriage. Seizing the unexpected opportunity to rid himself of his rival, the bailiff chooses Luk'yan as one of the serfs to be sold. Unmoved by the protestations and pleadings of the lovers and Anyuta's father, Trofim, he deepens their despair by having Luk'yan put in chains.

At this crucial moment, the master's jester, Afanasii, a clever buffoon who is sympathetic toward the oppressed peasants, arrives at the village. Masquerading as a fool, the jester (who closely resembles Arlecchino), laughs at the malicious bailiff and the Gallomaniastic master. Accepting an offer of money from Luk'yan on a promise to help them, Afanasii assures the lovers he will find
a happy solution to their seemingly hopeless situation.

Learning that Luk'yan and Anyuta know a little French, the jester advises them to say something in French in the presence of their master. Afanasii's judgement is proven correct. Amazed that, on his estate, peasants speak French and touched also by the fact that they are also capable of loving each other devoutly, Fiiulin, having returned to the village from a hunt, takes but a moment to quash Klementii's dark plot and free the young serfs to marry.

To the reader and probably more so to the viewer of the play who is familiar with *commedia dell'arte*, the role of jester in *Misfortune from a Coach* immediately recalls the energetic, comic antics of the famous Arlecchino. The jester, Arlecchino-like, champions the lovers' cause (for a price!), mocking all the while the stupidity of the master and his evil-disposed bailiff.

The bailiff, Klementii, reflects an obvious kinship with sly Brighella. Like the masterful schemer Brighella, he acts quickly, seizing the opportune moment which would provide him an advantage over his opponent. Having decided on an objective, he pursues it relentlessly and ruthlessly. However, he also knows his limits and, fearing for his own safety, cowardly retreats in the face of danger.

With equal ease one recognizes features shared by the lovers in this play and by the inamorati of the *commedia dell'arte*. As is invariably the case with the inamorati, Luk'yan and Anyuta abandon themselves to the mercy of fate; their rationality, which could be deployed on their behalf, all but consumed
by their passion. Begging for mercy, the lovers' single resort, proves ineffective against the stubborn resolve of their callous master. Fortunately, the resourceful buffoon sets everything right; everyone is satisfied with the end result including the victim (in commedia dell'arte, Dottore and Pantalone) of the ruse: Firiulin felicitously appoints Luk'yan as his French-speaking footman.

A comparison of Firiulin with the Mask, Pantalone, betrays sufficient consistency of character make-up to give good indication of the source of inspiration for the former. Prompted by materialistic aims, they interfere with lovers dependent upon their charity, thus provoking the intrigue of the comedy. However, the old men have exploitable weaknesses: Pantalone, his love of money, Firiulin, his predilection for things French. Predictably, therefore, the persecuted inamorati, coached by a Comic who determines their offensive, at the very end, surmount the obstacles preventing their happiness. The result calls for a celebration which, as we have seen, closes the play in a traditional commedia dell'arte way.

The creation of Knyazhnin's best comic works, Khvastun and Chudaki, was inspired by N. E. Novikov's satire, D. E. Fonvizin's humour and by certain aspects of the comic works of Carlo Goldoni. Fonvizin and Novikov directed Knyazhnin's attention to the abundance of indigenous material while Goldoni offered examples of a superb comic mould by which the author's insight could be effectively translated. Reminding us that Knyazhnin translated three Goldoni comedies during his career, as opposed to a single French one, L. Kulakova explains:
"His direct work on the brilliant dramaturgy of Goldoni was an excellent school....Namely, from Goldoni he was able to acquire that liveliness of action which distinguishes the comedies of Knyazhnin from many of the comic writers of the 18th century. Goldoni...was able to inspire the complication and diversity of characters inherent in Khvastun and especially in Chudaki." 3

No doubt our author's inclination toward Italian comedy was engendered not only by his translations, but also by performances in Russia of Italian actors playing the improvised comedy and the written comedy of their great compatriots, C. Goldoni, C. Gozzi and P. Metastasio.

At a superficial glance there would appear to be considerable disparity between the dramatis personae in Knyazhnin's Khvastun and the traditional comics of commedia dell'arte. However, a more deliberate investigation immediately uncovers a remarkable congruity between the Russian and Italian comic personalities regarding their roles and their interactions in the central intrigue.

For the main theme of Khvastun, Knyazhnin chose an episode from 18th century Russian 'high society'. Contrary to the usual real-life outcome (the 'Verkholets', more often than not, succeeded handily with their fraud), the author steers his comedy to the ideal commedia dell'arte ending: the villains are chastised, the heroes are rewarded and the play concludes with a happy marriage.

Posing as a rich count who enjoys the favour of the court, Verkholet, who in reality is an impoverished, rankless aristocrat, craftily resolves that marriage to Milena whose cre-
dulous mother, Chvankina, harbours a large and prosperous estate, will secure him the social rank and financial independence he covets. Under normal circumstances, his knavery would have been expedited without interference since Chvankina, like the parents of the inamorati, prefers an advantageous social-financial arrangement for her marriageable daughter. Milena, however, in love with Zamir, a passionate young nobleman who is likewise inclined, considers marriage to Verkholet equivalent to a death sentence - she contemplates a suicidal escape - and stubbornly opposes her mother's wishes.

In order to undermine the obstinacy of his victim, the guileful braggart induces his servant, Polist, to assist him. Polist in turn wins the confidence of Milena's servant, Marina, and together they launch an 'Arlecchino-Colombina' intrigue intended to sever the Milena-Zamir liaison. Themselves spurred on by the anticipated reward of their own marriage at the successful conclusion of their contrivance, the Russianzanni resort to a variety of trickery. Disguised as her master, Milena, Marina deceives Zamir, making him believe that his love has forsaken him for Verkholet. Enraged, our hero sets off in search of his rival. Meanwhile, continuing to play her zanni role expertly, Marina, who is aware of Chvankina's vulnerability, cleverly tempts her with Verkholet's title, riches and importance, goading her to force Milena to marry the self-appointed Count. During their discourse, each reveals her peculiarities: Chvankina, as the inamorata parent often does, imagines herself still attractive to the opposite sex (Pantalone often pursues the young girl who marries his son).
She panics at the prospect of losing an opportunity to gain money and social prestige. Social and economic factors influence her selection of a husband for her daughter, and because of her immaturity, she is easily victimized by her servant. Marina, blessed with a keen wit, makes fun of her mistress, humours and controls her at will by playing on her weaknesses.

Championed by his servant cohorts, Verkholet is confident of the success of his scheme. However, Zamir's father, Cheston, appears on the scene and during an ensuing conversation in which Verkholet, Prostodum, Polist and Chvankina take part, the authenticity of Verkholet's self-proclaimed importance becomes suspect. Cheston, responsible for unmasking the braggart-imposter, fills the slot of father of the inamorato, exemplifying a wise respectable old man who holds his son's best interests at heart. Discarding the commedia dell'arte garb and manner, Cheston, a re-modelled Pantalone, establishes a polarity with the Dottore-like Prostodum. Like his masked counterpart, Dottore, who considers himself well educated, informed and competent in debate, but in actuality is a pedantic hypocrite, so Prostodum considers himself qualified for a position in the senate when, in fact, he is just a gullible simpleton.

Prostodum's nephew, Verkholet, reflects characteristics akin to the commedia dell'arte bravado, Capitano. A braggart, cheat and imposter, Verkholet responds to Zamir's challenge as does the Spaniard when similarly confronted:

"Zamir: We must bid each other farewell with swords in our hands! ... In any case one of us must die!"
Frightened by the threat, Polist tries to sneak away but is caught by Verkholet whose intention it is to pit him against Zamir:

"Verkholet: I am a count, sir, I am a count; it is beneath me to fight with you; you may confront Polist with your sword." 5

Claiming that rank has no significance in the face of an insult, Zamir insists on satisfaction from Verkholet. Attempting a second evasion, Verkholet, Capitano-style, boasts:

"Verkholet: Fine. Have you heard about me, About the miracles I have performed in the past? Had you heard, you wouldn't be so brave." 6

With Polist's superlatives as encouragement, (he displays a ready wit and sarcasm throughout the play), Verkholet relates his heroic deeds (the slaughtering of hundreds of enemies, the taking of cities and fortresses, etc.), adding that he does not want Zamir to die at his hand. Losing patience, Zamir draws his sword, but before he can carry out his vengence, Chwankina and Milena, attracted by the commotion, enter in time to save the cowardly Verkholet.

A victim of his own bragging, vanity and indiscretion, Verkholet himself brings on the disintegration of his plan. Marina's impersonation of Milena is also discovered by Zamir and the lovers' quarrel is quickly reconciled. When Verkholet's machination is finally bared to all, Chvankina, like the parents of the inamorati, does a complete about-face and enthusiastically accepts Zamir as her son-in-law. Apparently, the social elite of the capital learning in a flash of Verkholet's misdeed, banish him from the fold forever. All that remains undone is the customary marriage ceremony.
Knyazhnin's final comedy in verse, Chudaki (The Eccentrics), is a penetrating satire on the highborn of 18th century Russia. The author's comical presentation represents an irrevocable condemnation of the senseless eccentricity of the supposed-responsible members of Russia's elite. Only the two servants, Prolaz (Dodger) and Marina, and to a lesser extent the helpless lovers, Priyat (Friend) and Ulin'ka are accepted by the audience simply because their faults are human.

Chudaki (1790) of all Knyazhnin's comedies, most closely resembles the commedia dell'arte in its character types and thematic layout. Clearly evident is the servant-lover-master association in which the quick-witted servants maintain steadfast control over the developing course of events, thereby determining a desirable fate for their lover-masters. A co-ordinated servant intrigue unites the 'inamorati', Priyat and Ulin'ka, whose only hope is their servants' guile. Knyazhnin does not forget the traditional villain, Vetromakh (Windbeater), who schemes to marry the Russian inamorata for her money. He is assisted by a repulsive Brighella-like servant, Vysonos (Highnose), who plays third party to the servant triangle which parodies the main love theme. Aside from the tenacious Vetromakh, the major obstacle confronting the servants is the girl's parents. Both Lentyagin (Laggard), a self-proclaimed philosopher (a hypocrite cast in the image of Dottore), and his wife, Lentyagina, a social climber, select a husband for Ulin'ka on the basis of their selfish ambitions. However, the servants (Prolaz in particular), intervene, involving themselves in a series of comical scenes that attest to the author's facility in the use of ac-
tion to create laughter, a skill well developed by the Masks in improvised scenarios.

The outstanding action scenes of the comedy involve the two servants, Prolaz and Vysonos. Rivals for Marina’s attention, the ‘zanni’ cannot muster the courage to assert their claims. Each readily threatens the other with violence: Vysonos assures Prolaz that he would throw him out the window, while Prolaz counters with a vivid description of how he would catch Vysonos by his locks, mess his curls and punch him in the nose. However, the ridiculously extreme caution with which they approach each other betrays their cowardice and the unlikelihood of their intentions being carried out.

At their next encounter (a scene that is reminiscent of a commedia dell’arte lazzer or a Russian folk interlude), they come within striking range of each other. Emboldened by the presence of Vetromakh whom they believe will not permit bloodletting, they exchange slaps. However, Prolaz, underestimating his opponents, provokes an attack on himself. Instructing Vysonos to hold him, Vetromakh beats Prolaz with a rope, evoking a loud clamour from the luckless servant.

In veritable zanni fashion, the servants meet for an action-filled third and decisive confrontation. The comic interlude of scene 12, act IV (8 pages), is obviously intended as an animated highlight of the comedy. It is distinguished by a liveliness of action and a slant of humour which vividly recalls the comic Masks’ interludes. The comic business stems from the ridiculous behavior of the antagonists in their attempts to out-bluff each other. For the duration of the scene, the dialogue, which includes
numerous effective asides, assumes a complementary role, enhanc-
ing the comic effect produced by the pantomime of the buffoons. The servants' asides, in contrast to their verbal facades which are intended to conceal cowardice, outline the fear of conflict ex-
pressed by the actions of the adversaries. Assuming proud and brave postures, Prolaz and Vysonos, their knees quaking, utter the following:

"Vysonos (to himself): May the Devil take him! He looks as if he'd eat me alive.

Prolaz:(to himself): His pale countenance fore-
bodes ill for me: he looks like he'd eat me up as if I was a little turnip." 7

The entire scene affords ample opportunity for improvised action. The author's instructions, in parentheses, may well be a fragment of a *commedia dell'arte* scenario. The antagonists, without unsheathing their daggers and with great distance separating them, have feigned a battle. Satisfied with their display of bra-
very, they lay aside their weapons:

"Vysonos (laying aside his dagger).
Prolaz (laying aside his dagger), (Takes one step forward).
Vysonos (also takes one step forward).
(They approach each other!)
Vysonos (stopping)
Prolaz (Suddenly runs up to Vysonos, unbuttons his shirt and a multitude of papers fall out), (He gives Vysonos a slap in the face.
Vysonos (gives Prolaz a slap in the face)
Prolaz (runs for his dagger)
Vysonos (also runs for his dagger)" 8

Appearing serious about concluding their duel, they again prepare to determine a victor:

"Prolaz: Good-for-nothing! Be prepared to de-
fend yourself. (Thrusting from a dis-
tance, retreats)

Vysonos: Bid your last farewell!
(Also thrusting from a distance, retreats)

Prolaz: (aside): No one's coming to separate us.

Vysonos (aside): How merciless people have become! We're spilling blood, but no one pays us any heed! I'll make a racket, maybe that'll help.

Both together: (Thrusting at each other from a distance) Hi! Hi! Hi!

Despite their efforts to attract attention, no one comes to interrupt their sham. Therefore, having concluded that they have "spilled enough blood", the Russian zanni readily agree to cease hostilities and instead, to drown them in wine.

While still under the influence of the recent bacchanal, Vysonos unknowingly assists Prolaz to overcome the only remaining obstacle separating the 'inamorati'. Encountering Lentyagina, the drunken Vysonos unmasks his master, Vetromakh, before her, revealing his truly corrupt character and his evil plot. Prolaz's task (convincing Lentyagina to accept Priyat) is, therefore, considerably simplified.

The other suitors, the zanni pair, Trompetin, Svirelkin, the retired Judge and Major, assembled by the matchmaker, Trusim, who also exhibits zanni traits, are all spurned by the inamorata and her parents who have fallen for the servant intrigue and now welcome Priyat into their fold. The intrigue having reached its successful conclusion, everyone looks forward to a commedia del-l'arte double marriage of the rewarded servants and of the inamorati.

Chudaki can be considered the best example of Knyazhnin's artistic implementation of the principles of the Comedy of Masks. As indicated earlier, another such author was I. A. Krylov, to whom I shall now direct my attention.
When first encountering I. A. Krylov, most students of Russian literature unfortunately consider only Krylov the Fabulist, not recognizing that he was also a dramatist of considerable stature. Yet during a fifty-year literary career which also included journalism, he produced six comedies, five comic operas, four tragi-comedies, two tragedies and one fairytale opera. One of the harshest social critics of the 18th century, throughout his plays Krylov mercilessly censures those corrupt members of the nobility whose senseless pursuit of wealth and social status caused much human suffering. Employing comedy skillfully and effectively, he capitalized on the satirical benefits gained from laughter aroused at the expense of these human improprieties.

Krylov launched his literary career with a comic opera, *Kofeynitsa* (The Fortune-teller), which he presented to a Petersburg theatre in 1785. Unaccustomed to doing business with sixteen-year olds, the theatre directors turned Krylov down. However, undaunted by this initial failure, the youthful writer dedicated himself to his chosen career with renewed ambition and energy. Over a number of years he created dramatic works which equalled the best Russian comedies of the 18th century. His last and best known comic works, *Modnaya lavka* (The Fashion Shop, 1806) and *Urok dochkam* (A Lesson for His Daughters, 1807) were very enthusiastically welcomed by the public and the theatre critics alike. Although relentlessly ridiculing the despicable Gallomania of the Russian nobility, both plays miraculously passed the censor and remained in theatre repertories for roughly forty years.

One of Krylov's most controversial plays, a satire ob-
viously directed at the classical tragedy and at the decadent court of Paul I, was Podshchipa (Trumf); written in 1797 expressly for Prince C. F. Golitsin and first performed by his amateur serf theatre company. Staging of this tragi-comedy was tolerated only in private or amateur theatres and permission to publish it was not granted until 1869, forty-five years after Krylov's death.

How did this controversial and able playwright first become interested in the theatre? His early associations with theatre originated in the provincial market place where the public was entertained, especially during festivals and holidays, by traveling comedians and by local amateurs. Krylov apparently took a keen interest in these impromptu performances of interludes, puppet shows and folk comedies. As a result, an atmosphere reminiscent of the market place entertainment pervades many of his works.

At some time during his youth, Krylov came into contact with Italians, probably by way of the theatre. His interest led him to learn the language and to translate several Italian comic works. As a playwright, he was certainly familiar with the performances of Italian improvised comedies, then prevalent in all segments of Russian society. The plot structure, the comic business and the characters of his comedies attest to the influence of commedia dell'arte on his dramaturgy.

The plot structure of an Italian improvised comedy centers around the interaction of two paired sets of characters - the master and his servant, and the lovers. One critic comments on the presence in Krylov's comedies of the servant-master rela-
Krylov adapted this traditional relationship, usually denoted in improvised comedy by a zanni and Pantalone, as a means of decrying the wretched condition of the peasant in his own country. In juxtaposing nobleman and serf on stage, he inexorably condemned the self-indulgence of the ruling class and sought to elevate the lower classes to the level of dignity they deserved. Except for the occasional digression into serious moralizing, as is the habit of the character Sumburov in Modnaya lavka, the noblemen elders Krylov presents on stage do not deviate much from the traditional comic Masks, fathers of the inamorati, Dottore and Pantalone: despite their pedantic, hypocritical and pretentious tendencies, they remain sympathetic and gullible old men.

By creating in his own comedies a satirical effect that bears a relationship to commedia dell'arte, Krylov succeeded in making theatre audiences laugh his comic characters into public prominence where the real people in society which they caricatured could be judged by all.

Once Krylov had decided upon a literary career, he managed a foot-hold with his first theatrical attempt, Kofeynitsa, a comic opera in four acts, written in rhymed folk couplets. Although it lacks the keen wit and theatrical finesse manifest in his best comedies, Kofeynitsa does reveal kernels of realism and
insight which, when combined with theatrical experience, were to make Krylov a first-rate dramatist. The play is a political statement, a realistic and satirical exposé of the merciless tyranny of landowners on their serfs.

The villain of this comic opera, Prikazchik (Bailiff), overseer for the estate of landowner, Novomodova (New Fashion), desiring the serf Anyuta for his wife, devises a scheme to interrupt plans for her marriage to Pyotr, another serf on the estate. After stealing some precious silver spoons from his landlady, Prikazchik accuses Pyotr of the crime. He then bribes Kofeynitsa, a fortuneteller, to support his accusation. The gullible Novomodova orders Pyotr sent into the army as punishment for his supposed theft. In an effort to save Pyotr and their daughter's marriage, Anyuta's parents sell all their belongings, hoping to repay Novomodova for the stolen spoons. Unappeased, however, she takes the money, refuses to allow Pyotr to marry, and decides to sell him in order to buy herself fashionable clothes.

With the odious intrigue a virtual success, Kofeynitsa demands her share of the silver spoons. As Prikazchik is counting them out, Novomodova, Pyotr, Anyuta and her parents burst in unexpectedly. Caught 'red handed', the thieves are sternly punished: Prikazchik is sent into the army, and Kofeynitsa to jail. Pyotr is appointed Novomodova's new bailiff and the young serfs look forward to a happy wedding celebration.

Of interest in Krylov's Kofeynitsa is the plot: lovers endure anxiety due to the excessive authority of their masters. In Kofeynitsa, the master is provoked by an intriguing villain who
has designs on the inamorata, a serf. The lovers' future, therefore, appears in grave danger. Krylov achieves the predictable happy ending by introducing a lucky stroke of fate that reveals the conspiracy and re-establishes the integrity of the accused. The preparation for the marriage of the virtuous serfs ends the play.

The plot's basic likeness to the Italian comic opera and scenario is obvious. However, it has been slightly altered. The *zanni* (usually a male and female pair), who combine an adeptness at manipulating people and events with a measure of luck to secure good fortune for their inamorati masters, have been modified by Krylov into a pair of offensive characters, the bailiff and the fortuneteller. Their traditional role (assisting the lovers) has been substituted by the *deus ex machina* - a timely coincidence.

The lovers, although they are serfs, do reflect the traditional line of *commedia dell'arte* inamorati; paralyzed by their fatalism, they are incapable of controlling their own destiny. Their master's gullibility on the one hand and her generosity on the other, when she realizes her mistake, recall qualities attributable to Pantalone.

*Kofeynitsa* shows promise of a bright future for the playwright: the play demonstrates a genuine attempt by the author to create a new awareness and originality. By taking up the cause of the serfs, making them the central figures of his comic opera, and by writing their dialogue in the vernacular, Krylov placed himself at the outset of his career, among the avant-garde of the 18th century Russian dramatists. As Krylov matured and accumulated exper-
ience in theatre, he was able to apply and refine his talent. A tragi-comedy, Podshchipa (Trumf), written some fifteen years after Kofeynitsa, displays the author's expansive insight into the art of writing comedy.

Following Kofeynitsa, Krylov wrote two tragedies and several comedies. Disenchanted, however, due to lack of publication and staging success, the young playwright turned to journalism, devoting his talent and energy to editing and writing for various journals over a period of a decade. Renewing his interest in drama, in 1798, he translated an Italian comic opera, Sonny poroshok, and composed his tragi-comedy Podshchipa. Written for the amateur serf theatre of Prince C. F. Golitsin, who had fallen into disfavour with Tsar Paul I, the play was first performed in 1800. Krylov himself portrayed the villain, Trumf, and, if we are to believe contemporary accounts, his performance was excellent.

Podshchipa never reached the public theatres, nor was it published during his lifetime. However, private and amateur theatre groups staged the play regularly and it achieved a wide circulation in manuscript form, eventually becoming a favourite with the Decembrists.

Krylov's aim in writing Podshchipa was two-fold: to create a devastating satire of the German orientated court of Paul I, and to parody the stilted characters of classical tragedy. His success in the former is evident from the uncompromising reaction of the court censor, who prohibited presentation or printing of the work. The parody of classical characters is described by one critic as follows:

"The dramatis personae of the comedy are depicted
in the manner of the folk theatre, as grotesque and comical figures of a puppet show." This critic might have mentioned the fact that these comical figures also reflect the behavior of the comic Masks. The plot around which Krylov chose to weave his satire of Paul I's court is uncomplicated and in many respects recalls the plot form of *commedia dell'arte*. In order to retain his throne, the vanquished Tsar Vakula has offered his daughter, the beautiful Princess Podshchipa in marriage to a villainous German prince, Trumf. From Podshchipa's confidant, Chernavka, we learn that Trumf and his army have conquered the tsar's kingdom. The princess, in love with her childhood sweetheart, Prince Slyunyai, resolutely refuses to marry the conqueror. The comedy and suspense reach a climax as Trumf, with sword drawn, is about to disembowel Slyunyai and drag the terrified heroine off to her hapless wedding. Tsar Vakula's timely entrance saves the day. He proclaims the incredible - Trumf's forces have been miraculously defeated! The play closes with expectations of a jubilant celebration: Podshchipa's marriage to her lover, Slyunyai.

Princess Podshchipa's refusal to carry out her father's wishes provokes the events of the play. The interaction of the three protagonists, forming a parody on the classical love triangle, sparks a series of highly amusing scenes which, as well as revealing Krylov's ability as a dramatist, also betray his knowledge of the Italian improvised comedy.

The play opens on the day that Podshchipa is to be forced to marry Trumf. He visits the princess to inform her of the wedding
plans and to proclaim his love for her. Podshchipa's cold reception, however, angers him and he finally storms out. Meanwhile, having overheard the conversation, Slyunyai tip-toes cautiously on stage to decry Trumf's mean nature and to express his fear for the princess' life. She urges him on:

"Podshchipa: Would you really kill the villain with your sword? Speak, dear Prince, console me quickly!

Slyunyai: Yes, yes! See, I'm wearing a wooden sword.

Chernavka: Is that possible, sire?

Slyunyai: Well, what do you expect? Mother didn't let me carry a steel one.

Chernavka: But, Prince, if someone were to attack you ...

Podshchipa: Tell me, how would you defend yourself?

Slyunyai: And what were feet made for?" 3

Slyunyai's wooden sword offers a clue which links him with the traditional Italian masked comic, Arlecchino. Reliance upon speedy feet to deliver him from danger also recalls a frequent recourse of the zanni.

As the scene continues, the romantic Podshchipa proposes that they take refuge in death as they cannot rely upon Slyunyai's swordsmanship to save them:

"Podshchipa: Are you ready to die with me?

Slyunyai: Certainly!

Podshchipa: Dying together will make death welcome to us. Let us go, we shall throw ourselves headlong out of the window and break our skulls. (Pulling him by the hand)
Slyunyai: Wait, wait a minute! It is too high from here. Certainly I'll jump, but listen, only from a lower window.

Podshchipsa: I can see this mode of death frightens you. ... Come, we shall throw ourselves into the pond.

Slyunyai: Certainly ... only you see, I can't swim." 4

As a last resort, Podshchipsa hands Slyunyai a knife. Returning it, however, he suggests she use it first and he will follow suit. Exasperated and outraged by Slyunyai's cowardice, the princess declares that she no longer loves him and cannot tolerate his slobbery countenance.

In presenting this polarized character pair as lovers and social equals, Krylov is exploiting the comic and satiric effect accrued from the juxtaposition. By so doing, the playwright has deviated from the tradition of the inamorati of commedia dell'arte, who had their origin in classical comedy and who were equals in all respects. Podshchipsa, parodying the classical heroine who seeks to escape her evil suitor by self-inflicted death, is obviously incompatible with Slyunyai who, Arlecchino-like, jealously guards his own 'skin', abandoning his love and self-respect in the face of a direct threat to his person. A cowering, pathetic, and sluggish figure whose speech defect (he cannot enunciate the consonants "l" and "r") further diminishes his already unimposing figure, Slyunyai is stimulated into action only by the instinct of self preservation. Inheriting Arlecchino's wooden sword and the disagreeable side of the zanni's character, he is, however, denied any of Arlecchino's positive qualities, such as vitality, agility and cunning. A sterile nonentity, Syunyai is incapable of outwitting even
the brazen, moronic Trumf.

In the following scene Slyunyai has the opportunity
thrust upon him - a face to face confrontation with his dreaded
rival. After a brief verbal exchange Trumf, who throughout the
play speaks with a heavy German accent, draws his sword:

"Trumf: Prepare yourself to die!

Slyunyai: Oh, am I to die? Have mercy! What
have I done to anger you so?"

Abruptly changing his mind regarding a duel with sabers, Trumf pro-
duces a pair of pistols:

"Trumf: Well, chose your weapon!

Slyunyai: Look, he is giving me one! ... Thank you
my dear Count! But, it isn't loaded, is it?

Trumf: Ya, Ya! He is loaded! Now come on,
shoot - which prince will to marry." 5

Slyunyai refuses to give Trumf satisfaction, despite the latter's
tirade of insults and abuse.

"Slyunyai: Whatever you say! I'm guilty; but
of death I am afraid.

Trumf: Shoot!

Slyunyai: Oh, no!" 6

On Slyunyai's promise that he completely withdraw his claim to
Podshchipa, Trumf agrees to spare his life; but Slyunyai must go
to the princess immediately and persuade her to marry the German
conqueror.

Very likely recognizing the parallelism between Ita-
lian sentiments toward the ruling Spaniards and Russian resent-
ment of the Germans at court, Krylov's choice of a mould in which
to cast his villain, Trumf, was influenced by his acquaintance with the Mask, Capitano. This caricature of the dashing soldier and lover was distinguished by a pretended courage, an insolent swagger and a reputation of mythical victories in hand-to-hand combat and in winning the hearts of countless beautiful ladies. He is seen constantly forcing his attentions on the inamorata, always without success.

Trumf, in the manner of Capitano, challenges Slyunyai to a duel, knowing beforehand that his opponent poses no threat. However, were he challenged by a superior force, he would obviously be quick to show his heels. Failing in his courtship of Podshchipa, Trumf in desperation resorts to blackmail, threatening to kill the defenceless Slyunyai if he does not succeed in persuading her to marry him.

Unknown to Slyunyai, Podshchipa has consulted a gypsy fortuneteller (Krylov's substitute for the intriguing Servetta), who praises him, thereby reawakening in the princess her love for him. When they next meet, the princess greets Slyunyai with a display of emotion that unnerves him. How will he ever be able to keep his promise to Trumf?

"Slyunyai (aside): Ah! She loves me even more!
Podshchipa: Slyunyaiyushka, my friend!
Slyunyai (aside): Oh, no! I'm completely lost!" 7

Trumf, who has been waiting for Podshchipa to accompany him to the church, furiously confronts the lovers. He is on the verge of slaying his rival when Tsar Vakula bursts in to announce the defeat of
the German forces:

"Vakula: Hurrah! Our boys took 'em, ya hear!" 8

Tsar Vakula's features link him to Pantalone. He is the heroine's degenerate father who offers her to the villain in exchange for a personal concession. His undignified speech and actions make him a satirical caricature of the tsar. He casts the figure of a child-ish, incompetent ruler.

The lovers and the villain compare favourably with the inamorati and Capitano of commedia dell'arte. However, the servants, Chernavka and Durduran, who would normally carry on the intrigue of the comedy, content themselves with the roles of messenger. Their commedia dell'arte niche is filled by a Russian folk theatre character, the Gypsy, who, summoned by the Tsar, brings about the unexpected rout of Trumf.

In contrast to Kofeynitsa, where dialogue and action are kept simple and realistic, Podshchipa puts to better use these dramatic elements, blending them with the absurd to produce a keen edged satire shrouded in unsophisticated comedy. The scenes involving the lovers and the villain, in particular, clearly invite exaggerated gesticulation to accompany the verbal exchange. In some instances (the conflicts between Trumf and Slyunyai) action completely dominates, becoming the main source of humour.

In 1806, fulfilling a promise he made to an old friend, the famous actor, I. A. Dmitrevsky, Krylov wrote a comic satire, Modnaya lavka (The Fashion Shop) in the short space of three weeks. Its triumph in Russian theatres was instantaneous. Directing his satire primarily at the Gallomania which stigmatized the Russian
nobility for a quarter of a century prior to the Napoleonic invasion, Krylov resolutely censures the fatuous noblemen for clamouring after French fashion. At the same time he draws a sympathetic picture of the underprivileged of Russian society, all too often victimized by the capricious aristocracy.

The setting for *Modnaya lavka* is a French fashion shop in St. Petersburg, owned by a Madame Kare. Masha (a Russian version of Servetta), the salesclerk-serf who has been permitted to work in the city, is the property of the hero's (Lestov) sister. In the shop with Masha, Krylov's passionate inamorato, Lestov, relates the unhappy consequences of his marriage proposal to Liza, the daughter of a provincial landowner, Sumburov (a parochial Pantalone). Initially, Sumburov had given Lestov reason to be optimistic, as he and Lestov's deceased father had been close friends. Unfortunately, however, Sumburov managed to persuade him to reject Lestov in favour of her choice, a wealthy relative named Nedoshchetov. Showing no compassion for the mutual feelings of the lovers, she has arranged her step-daughter's marriage on the promise of a handsome profit. His means considerably more modest, Lestov has been forced to withdraw. In his absence, a rumour of his death has spread, probably spawned by Sumburov and intended to divest Liza of any remaining hope for her lover. For a year, Lestov tells Masha, he has not heard news of Liza, and although as a result of their estrangement he languishes in despair, his passion for her has intensified.

Entering the shop on the heels of Lestov's lament, Sumburova, whose head spins at the very mention of Paris, announces
that she is preparing a dowry for her step-daughter and demands to be shown the latest French fashions. Shaken by the unexpected news of Liza's imminent marriage, Lestov vows to forestall it at all costs. Taking pity on him, Masha proposes a plan which, she assures Lestov, will win him Liza's hand. In return, Lestov promises her a substantial reward upon successful implementation of her scheme.

Learning from Sumburova that Liza is waiting in a nearby carriage, Masha takes the situation in hand and instructs Lestov to bribe a servant in order to find Liza. While he meets Liza, Masha promises to keep Sumburova occupied in the shop. Instead of offering him a bribe, however, Lestov gets the servant drunk. Encouraged by his happy reunion with Liza, he later visits her parents in a fruitless attempt to persuade them to accept him as their son-in-law. The result might have been positive but for Sumburova, who discloses that not only was Lestov responsible for the servant's shameless drunkenness, but that this offensive act was prompted by an even greater outrage - Lestov's secret rendezvous with Liza. Angered by this trickery, Sumburov shatters any new hope for the lovers.

Act II opens with Masha reading a letter from Lestov, delivered by his servant, Andrei. The letter describes his recent misfortune and proposes his latest solution. Masha reads aloud adding her own contemptuous comments:

"Masha: '...I want to go and fight my rival!' - Excellent! - 'Then I'll return and fight with the Sumburovs...!' - Still better! - 'Then I'll shoot myself.' - How ingenious! - 'Can you think of anything better? Come and counsel me.' - This would
be far more sensible.

Andrei: He ordered me to ask you for an answer!

Masha: Tell him politely: you, forsooth, Sir, are out of your mind. Goodbye." 9

Although this new predicament disrupts Masha's scheme, she capitalizes on a fortunate coincidence to return the blundering Lestov to Sumburov's favour. An old acquaintance of Madame Kare, Trishe (a Brighella-like zanni), entering the fashion shop, produces a promissory note belonging to Nedoshchetov, with whom he apparently has had illicit business transactions. At Masha's prompting, Trishe offers to sell the note to Sumburov. The discovery of the dissolute side of Nedoshchetov's character forces Sumburov to reconsider his condemnation of Lestov's recent trickery. Just as the situation seems to be improving, Lestov, due to his consistent lack of tact and his incapacitating "inamorato romanticizing", suffers another, more severe setback.

Liza and Sumburova join Masha and Sumburov in the shop. Masha skillfully arranges for the Sumburovs to be busy in another room, leaving Liza alone to meet Lestov. On Masha's cue, Lestov enters the shop. During the ensuing dialogue, Liza promises that she will marry Lestov, or die an old maid. Reminding her that they must consider an all or nothing approach, Masha provokes an exaggerated romantic outburst which is so characteristic of the Italian inamorati:

"Lestov: Will you agree to come with me to my sister's; her village is three versts from here, there we will get married - and then no one will separate us.

Liza: My God, what are you proposing? ..."
Lestov: I want only one word from you ... you are silent? Then good-bye forever..."

His daring proposition and final farewell are too much for gentle Liza. She faints. At his wits' end, Lestov throws himself on his knees before her. Returning in time to see the finale of the lovers' melodrama, an astounded Sumburov exclaims:

"Sumburov: What! What! What does this mean? Before my daughter on his knees! ... In a shop! In view of the whole city! In broad daylight! Oh horrors, oh shame! ... Criminals!"

Lestov's pleas for forgiveness fall on deaf ears. Suspecting a conspiracy, the outraged Sumburov, in a withering invective, dissolves all hope for the lovers.

In the final act, Masha undismayed by the recent misfortune, completes preparations for a police inspection of the fashion shop: Trishe has informed them that Madame Kare is selling contraband. Meanwhile, Lestov, hoping to entice Sumburova to come back to the shop with Liza, sends her a message offering her fashionable clothes at a reduced price if she comes to the shop that evening.

First to arrive is Sumburov. However, Masha manages to get rid of him, thus avoiding another Lestov blunder. Attracted by the proposed bargain, Sumburova steals into the shop, but is forced to hide in a closet when her husband, with Liza, knocks at the door. Following them, the police officer and Trishe, whose role recalls the zanni, enter and begin to search the premises. When Lestov appears, Masha, who has already determined the "winning combination", takes him aside and explains the si-
uition. Finding no contraband, Trishe and the police officer approach the closet which conceals Sumburova. On Sumburov's insistence, they demand the key from Masha. Sumburov himself snatch-es it out of her hand and moves to unlock the door. Masha finally tells him the bad news:

"Masha: Your wife, I'm telling you; take a look through the window if you don't believe me.

Sumburov: Ooph! I must be delirious! - No, it's she all right.... Oh, the criminal! Oh, the scoundrel! Now, here's a good marketable product. There's contraband for you!

Masha: Well why aren't you opening the closet, Sir?"

The policeman and Trishe press Sumburov to open it. By this time totally distraught, he claims not to have the key. Masha, however, forcing the intrigue to its conclusion, reminds him that it is in his hand:

"Sumburov: Ah! You're right, I would like to swallow and choke on it in order to avoid this catastrophe; oh, worthless wife! Satan himself must have put you in this damned closet to shame me."

Choosing the ideal moment, Lestov reminds him of the scandal which will surely follow, then offers to help him, provided that Sumburov reconsider his marriage proposal to Liza. Having no other recourse, Sumburov calls Liza and announces his decision.

"Sumburov: Daughter, come here, give me your hand - here is your fiancé!

Liza: What happiness! Dear father, to whom do I owe such a change of fate?
Sumburov: To my good-for-nothing wife.

Liza: Ah! I am ready to throw myself at her feet! Where is mother?

Sumburov: Quiet, quiet! What concern is it of yours where she is? It's none of your business!" 14

Quite certain by now, that the closet conceals the sought-after contraband, Trishe demands the key. Anticipating this moment, Lestov steps forward to fulfill his promise. Recognizing Trishe as a valet he had employed previously, Lestov takes care to remind him of certain irregularities for which he was responsible and in which the police should still be interested. Fearing he may jeopardize his new social image, the former valet accepts Lestov's alternative - to withdraw his accusations regarding the fashion shop and to discontinue the search immediately.

With Trishe and the police officer gone, the door of the closet is opened. Unleashing a volley of abuse, Sumburov drags his mortified wife into the room and declares his decision to permit Liza and Lestov to marry. Questioning his sincerity, Sumburova evokes the long-awaited response:

"Sumburova: Is this possible, dearest husband?

Sumburov: Just watch and you'll see! Liza, kiss your fiancé! Now, do you believe that my intentions are sincere? I would allow no one except her fiancé to kiss my daughter.

Liza: Dearest father, you have made my life worth living!

Lestov: How can I ever express my gratitude! Liza, dear Liza! What happiness!" 15

Turning to Masha, Lestov reminds her that she will soon have her
freedom and the dowry he promised her for helping him win Liza's hand. Thus, not only are the lovers to be married, but also similar prospects for the servant Masha appear infinitely brighter.

The basic theme of *Modnaya lavka* compares favourably with those elaborated by the Comedy of Masks. A servant contrives to outsmart the inamorata's parents who are determined to choose a husband for her. A variety of suspensefully comical moments ensue, out of which the servant arises the victor. A self-assured vitality and keen insight among her "zanni attributes", Masha uses to advantage the idiosyncracies of the Sumburovs to accomplish the union of the inamorati.

Altering the *Modnaya lavka* theme somewhat in *Urok dochkam*, Krylov features a servant couple whose daring scheme to extort money is motivated by their desire to conclude their long delayed marriage plans.

Encouraged by the unexpected success of *Modnaya lavka*, Krylov set to work immediately on his next, but unfortunately, last comedy, *Urok dochkam* (*A Lesson for his Daughters*), published in 1807. The stage triumph of *Modnaya lavka* was repeated for this last play.

Very likely sensing the Napoleonic threat against Russia, Krylov intensified his anti-Gallomania thrust which had received public approval with *Modnaya lavka*. *Urok dochkam* represents an obvious attempt to renew feelings of nationalism that had been doused by the wave of Gallomania which had swept over the Russian aristocracy. Although the subject matter of the comedy is utilitarian, as a critical exposé, it is couched in a dramatic
form which is readily distinguished by its structural conformity with the Italian improvised comedy.

In *Urok dochka*, Krylov presents a patriotic Russian nobleman's attempt to cure his Frenchified daughters of their "foreign ailment". The mildly tyrannical Vel'karov, father of two teenage daughters, Fekla and Lukerya, who were educated in Moscow by a Parisienne, Madam Grigri, considers their fanatical attraction for everything French and their equally irrational abhorrence of everything Russian beyond his endurance. Determined to rid himself of their fatuity, Vel'karov escorts them to a country estate where he intends to confine them under the care of Nyanya Vasilisa, Krylov's re-creation of a Russian folk character, and their servant, Dasha, until they learn to appreciate their Russian heritage. He also chooses their husbands (in Pantalone fashion) whom they despise as being beneath their French-acquired dignity. Despite his tenacity, however, his empirical method of instruction appears ineffective.

By lucky coincidence, a gentleman, Cheston, arrives in the village of Vel'karov's estate. His servant, Semyon, and Dasha are engaged but cannot marry because they are unable to save enough money. Through a window in the Vel'kov hāme Semyon chances to see his love, with whom he parted in Moscow. The two servants quickly engage in a typically Arlecchino-Colombina dispute over who should be first to relate his experiences during the separation. At the conclusion of their *lazzo*, their anecdotes are heard; nothing extraordinary is revealed. This sort of comic scene which interrupts the flow of the main theme, afforded the comic Masks an
opportunity to display their improvisational ingenuity. During their exchange, Semyon learns of Fekla's and Lukerya's Gallomania and remembering the ease with which the French extorted money from this 'type' in Moscow, he skillfully devises a plan to procure from them the funds that would make his marriage to Dasha a reality.

Returning to the Vel'karov home, Semyon, disguised as the French traveller, Markiz, receives a cordial welcome from Vel'karov and, as he expected, is made to promise to abide by the rule imposed on Fekla and Lukerya: to speak only Russian. The daughters who pride themselves in speaking Russian poorly, are completely victimized by the servant-imposter. They praise his many superior French qualities and vie for the honour of being his wife.

Assisted by Dasha, Semyon succeeds beyond his expectations. Unfortunately, the garrulous females do not give him sufficient opportunity to ask for a loan. Anxious to try their French on a genuine Parisienne, they disregard the consequences of a reprisal from their father and lock Nyanya Vasilisa in their room. Alone now with Markiz, they begin to quiz him in French. Incapable of uttering a single French word, Semyon is hard pressed to avoid unveiling his ruse:

"Lukerya: Ecoutez, cher marquis...

Semyon: My God! What are you doing? I gave your father my word I wouldn't speak French with you.

Fekla: Il ne saura pas.

Semyon: Impossible! Impossible! No way is it possible — he'll hear.

Lukerya: Mais de grâce..."

Semyon (running from them to the other side of the stage): Speak Russian,
speak Russian. Merciful God, speak Russian! Oh, Nyanya Vasilisa!" 15

The sisters chase Semyon about the stage, imploring him to say something in French. At his wits' end, and on the verge of exhaustion, he is rescued by the return of Nyanya Vasilisa who restores the conversation to the obligatory Russian. This highly comic episode in which a servant's intrigue is threatened with discovery was a favorite scene in the commedia dell'arte repertory; the Masks used most advantageously such opportunities to create humour and satire.

Having barely escaped detection at the hands of Fekla and Lukerya, Semyon inadvertently reveals his trickery when he gives his family name as Glagol' (from the Russian verb glagolit' meaning 'to speak'). Learning his guest's surname, Vel'karov suspects a hoax and moves to expose Semyon's deceit:

"Vel'karov: ...Mr. Markiz, I permit you, or better still, I demand that you tell my daughters in my presence in French about your unfortunate adventure; how you were robbed in the forest."

Realizing his game is up, Semyon replies:

"Semyon (on his knees): Akh! Forgive a repenting sinner. I, sir, ... Akh! I'm not a Markiz, I, sir... Akh! I'm not a Frenchman, but only a free man ... and am called Sen'ka." 16

Semyon explains that his passionate love for Dasha caused him to assume the identity of a marquis. Dasha joins him on her knees before Vel'karov and begs him to have pity on true lovers. Struck by the humour of Semyon's intrigue and appeased by the value of the unexpected lesson given his daughters, Vel'karov allows his generous nature to influence his decision. Releasing Dasha from her ob-
ligations, he orders that something be prepared for the free servants on their journey.

Following the familiar commedia dell'arte route, the servant's brazen intrigue appears destined for success, but totters on the brink of disaster when discovered by the master. An unexpected benefit, the lesson learned by Vel'karov's daughters, transforms the impending disaster into good fortune. Although empowered to punish the schemers, Vel'karov magnanimously forgives and rewards them. Thus blessed, the triumphant servants rejoice at the prospects of their marriage. His determination renewed, Vel'karov returns to the task of re-educating his daughters. The comic circuit is completed.

Krylov's use of commedia dell'arte techniques in his comedies is readily apparent. Relying on the love intrigue as his central theme, as does improvised comedy, he also makes it the servants' responsibility to develop and carry the intrigue to its desired conclusion. The lovers can be of the nobility, as in Modnaya lavka, comparable to the inamorati, or simple servants, as in Urok dochkam, comparable to the zanni. Whether Krylov's servants intrigue in order to secure their own happiness or that of their masters, they consistently succeed, as do their commedia dell'arte counterparts, in outwitting their elderly opponents. Remnants of the paired character situation of commedia dell'arte are apparent in Krylov's works although he evidently used this structural form only when convenient. Physical dexterity and lively punning, two essential ingredients to a successful improvised play, also find predominance in Krylov's comedies. The humour of his plays depends largely upon comic gestures and antics; the dialogue assumes a bantering tone akin to that of commedia dell'arte.
CONCLUSION

Although Russian theatre originated in folk ritual and although folk comedy developed only to a relatively primitive level, noteworthy progress, in terms of existing Western theatre, was not achieved until after Europeans performed their comic repertories on the 18th century Russian stage.

The Italian masked comedians, performing their improvised *commedia dell'arte*, were among the most popular and most influential. From 1730 they animated courtly functions and indulged the audiences of public and private theatres. Their performances provided young Russian dramatists with living examples of a comic genre that boasted two centuries of triumphant existence and nearly a century of domination in Western European theatres.

Unfortunately, only scenario-remnants of the Italian improvised performances remain and because they have little artistic value, the matter of literary analysis and comparison is considerably complicated. Nevertheless, the basic traits of the Masks have been preserved in literature and on this basis a fruitful comparison is possible. Despite the fact that Russian dramatists unmasked the Italian Comics, divested them of their multicoloured dress and much of their spontaneity, and although the names of Arlecchino, Pantalone, Brighella and Colombina do not appear among the dramatic personae of Russian comedy until the 20th century, the essential qualities of these standardized figures and their relationship to one another in the plot of the comedy are very much apparent in the
comic works of I. A. Krylov, Ya. B. Knyazhnin and other 18th century dramatists.

The favoured contention of theatrical and literary scholars that the French theatre, Moliere in particular, provided the basis for Russian comedy I have avoided discussing because it would necessitate extending the scope of this thesis beyond reasonable limit. The fact that the French language and fashion was extremely popular in 18th century Russia inevitably prejudiced the judgements of researchers regarding due responsibility for theatrical development in Russia. As a result, the considerable Italian influence was obscured by the shadow of an exaggerated fund of research extolling French contributions. However, it is evident simply from the number of Italian artists, the duration of their presence in Russia and the wide scope of their artistry, music, ballet, opera and comedy, that they offered an effective tonic to the thirsting 18th century Russian theatre.

The Italian influence, however, did not cease at the gateway to the 19th century, but continued on, leaving its imprint on the comic works of such renowned Russian dramatists as N. Gogol. At the beginning of our present century, the Masks returned to the public stage, but on this occasion they hid the faces of native Russian actors.

As comedy represents the highest achievement in 18th century Russian drama, it is fitting that the greatest comedians in the world, the Comic Masks, were the main source of inspiration.
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FOOTNOTES

FOOTNOTES TO INTRODUCTION


2. V. V. Kallash, *Istoriya russkogo teatra*. (Moskva, 1914), p. 95.


FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER I


2. ibid., p. 18.


FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER II

1. V. Vsevolodskiy-Gerngross, Russkiy teatr ot istokov do serediny XVIII v. (Moskva, 1957), p.44.

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7. Varneke, p.44.


11. Ignatov, p.28.


13. ibid., p.43.


17. ibid., p.58.


19. Varneke, p.49.


4. V. Vsevolodsky-Gerngross, p. 33.  
7. Shambinago, p. 97.  
8. Slonim, p. 25.  
11. P. N. Arapov, *Dramaticheskiy al’bom s portretami russkikh artistov*. (Moskva, 1850), p. XVI.  
17. ibid., p. 51.  
22. ibid., p. 140.
FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER IV


3. L. I. Kulakova, p.34.


5. ibid., p.394.

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8. ibid., p.531.

9. ibid., p.531-532.
FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER V


4. ibid., p.274.

5. ibid., p.288.

6. ibid., p.289.

7. ibid., p.290-291.

8. ibid., p.294.

9. ibid., p.352.

10. ibid., p.370.

11. ibid., p.371.

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13. ibid., p.393.

14. ibid., p.394.

15. ibid., p.431.

16. ibid., p.436.
APPENDIX II:

TRANSLATIONS OF ITALIAN QUOTATIONS:

Chapter I, page 10, quotation 5:

"The intermezzo or interlude had been, in fact, well-known for roughly two centuries in the countries of Europe as a means of diverting the spectator of religious or historical plays, with jests or quips between acts. These were peasant jokes in no way connected to the plot of the play. The intermezzo came to Russia, as did the school play, from Poland, where it had developed under the influence of the French farces and the commedia dell'arte."

Chapter I, page 12-13, quotation 8:

"The first of these (testimonies) dates from the first half of the 15th century, and precisely from 1437-39 when the metropolitan, Isodoro, came to Ferrara and Florence to participate in the council then in progress. Among those in his retinue was the Bishop of Suzdal', Avraam, who has left us a brief account of a performance of the Annunciation of Feo Belcari in Florence, at which Russians were present. In this account, the interest of the bishop from Suzdal' seems directed toward the presentation in its own right; he gives us information concerning the stage constructed in the church for the performance, concerning the costumes of the characters, the design of the curtain, and the machinery for the play.... Varneke points out, regarding Bishop Avraam, that the narration of his journey to Italy must have stirred interest in its readers, otherwise one could not explain the great number of copies of his work still in existence."

Chapter III, page 53, quotation 14:

"As had happened in other countries, Carlo Goldoni was known in Russia first of all as a librettist of comic plays set to music. In the repertory of the comic operas performed in St. Petersburg and Moscow by Italian actors between 1755 and 1760 we, in fact, find numerous librettos
by Goldoni, such as *Il Mondo della Luna*, *Il Filosofo di campagna*, *L'Arcadia in Bretà*, *I Bagni d'Abano* and others. But as a writer of comedies, it is very likely that Goldoni's name was made known first of all by the famous Truffaldino, Antonio Sacchi, who, in his various tours to major cities throughout Europe, could certainly not have failed to present those scenes which the Venetian playwright had composed expressly for him from *Le trentadue disgrazie di Arlecchino* to *Il Servitore di due padroni*.

Chapter III, page 54, quotation 15:

"The period came of the success of Locatelli and of his collaborators, especially of Giovanni Sacco, of his two sisters, Libera and Andreina, and of his wife Conti and of Belluzzi."
APPENDIX III

This collection of comedies compiled by V. N. Peretts, entitled "Ital'yanskiya Komedii i Intermedii predstavlenniya pri Imperatritsy anny Ioannovny v 1733-1735 g.g.", published in Petrograd in 1917, although not complete, nevertheless, is representative of the style of Italian comedy translated into Russian and performed in Russia during the 18th century.

The following list is a translation of the titles of these comic works.

1. **The Honest Courtesan.** Italian comedy. St. Petersburg, 1733.

2. **Emeraldina Learns to Hate.** Italian comedy. St. Petersburg, 1733.


4. **Climbing Over the Fence.** Italian comedy. St. Petersburg, 1733.

5. **Newspaper or Gazette.** Italian comedy. St. Petersburg, 1733.

6. **Arlecchino and Emeraldina, the Angry Lovers.** Italian comedy. St. Petersburg, 1733.


9. **Four Arlecchinos.** Italian comedy. St. Petersburg, 1733.

10. **Arlecchino as a Statue.** Italian comedy. St. Petersburg, 1733.

11. **An Impressario of Opera in the Canary Islands.**
    A musical interlude. St. Petersburg, 1733.

12. **The Old Miser.** A musical interlude. St. Petersburg, 1733.
23. Wishing to be Ill. A musical interlude. St. Petersburg, 1734.
27. Fun in the Water and in the Field. Italian comedy. St. Petersburg, 1734.
30. The Sorcery of Peter Dabana and Smeraldina, Queen of the Spirits. Italian comedy. St. Petersburg, 1734.
31. *The Misfortunes of Pantalone and Arlecchino, the Imaginative Courier, After, also a Barber of Fashion.* Italian comedy. St. Petersburg, 1734.


34. *The Lovers Oppose Eachother with Arlecchino the Turkish Pasha.* Italian comedy. St. Petersburg, 1734.

35. *An Argument about the Polish Gentry between Eularia, the Extravagant Widow and Pantalone, the Argumentative Merchant or Marquis D'Alta Polvere.* Italian comedy. St. Petersburg, 1735.


