Name: Kadeen Hammond

Professor: James Phillips

Assignment: Wiki Draft 2

Capitano

**Capitano** (the Captain)

Francesco Adreine created the first Captain of the *commedia dell’arte*, “a butt who had seldom a friend in the play, was the Captain, a Spaniard usually,” his character reflected the hated foreign mercenaries who crowded sixteenth century Italy (Smith 8). Each person that impersonated Capitano made some differences to “his countenance, wore his hat and his moustache cocked at a different angle and changed the color of his cape and the size of his sword,” but they all followed the general outlines laid down by Franceso (8). Capitano’s character is a boastful, cowardly bully, always in love and usually unsuccessful, he was an object for the wit of others to prey upon (8). Capitano “lives in a grandiose world of his own imagining, a creature whose visions are his only true reality” (Nicoll 98).

**Origins**

Commedia dell’Arte “comedy performed by professional, those who are recognized as artists” (Rudlin 14). The form has been given many other names, for example “commedia alla maschera (masked comedy), commedia improvviso (improvised comedy) and commedia dell’arte all’improvviso” (13). Commedia dell’arte was performed by professionals, they were masked and the character performances were “initially improvised on temporary outdoors platforms in simple costumes” (14). The Captain has two origins “literary: as in Plautus’ *Miles Gloriosus* and Trasone in Terence *Eunuchus* and fake Spanish mercenaries” (Rudlin 120). The Italian commedia character was a superimposition of the “Spanish hidalgo”, overbearing and tyrannical; “a mixture of Don Juan, Pizarro and Don Quixote;” more terrible at first than ridiculous, then progresses into a “bona fide comic figure,” who is nothing but a “hungry adventurer,” and a “cowardly sonorous fire eater” (120).

**Costume**

Capitano’s costume is very similar to that of a military dress in generals (Duchartre 229). The changes that occurred with each period were followed by Capitano. The early Italian Captain “wore a helmet, or morion, buff straps, and a long sword,” while his “Spanish prototype was decked out in an immense starch ruff, a wide plumed hat, and boots with scalloped edges at the top” (229-30). Capitano also appears tattered and shirtless sometimes and he always had a story to explain why this was so, such as “when he flew into passion his hair always stood on end and pierced his shirt so full of holes it looked like a colander” (Nicoll 98) (Picture). A real Spanish officer between the late 15th to early 16th century Spanish officer would wear “tight hose, studded brigantine with mail sleeves, sallet helmet, plate protection at knees and Moorish boots.” Late century 16th to 17th century an officer would wear a “half armor, ornate morion with plumes probably red-white-red and red sash and holding a rapier” (My Armoury.com).

**Mask**

The earliest Capitano’s mask was “flesh colored, and had a great menacing nose which served as a keynote to their character” (Duchartre 229). The masks had fierce bristling moustaches, which seemed like “veritable iron spikes defending the entrance to a citadel only too ready to capitulate” (229). The mask was intended to emphasize “the contrast between brave appearance and a craven nature” (229). His overly large nose was used as a phallic symbol so Capitano could appear even manlier than he really was. His nose represents a manly hood that is as exaggerated as everything else about him. His huge phallic nose compensates for what he is lacking.

**Props**

Capitano carried a long sword, which he is hardly able to hold and which was often carried upward (Nicoll 101). The use of his weapon was more of slapstick than an accessory and is a vital part of his personality (Rudlin 121). This means he had no real fighting skills or sword skill since he was not a real soldier. His sword was against him as a slap stick, more than he used it to actually defend himself.

**Stance**

The stance of Capitano is also important in understanding his character; he stands with his legs splayed out and chest puffed out. His stance is aimed at spanning maximum space to appear big and brave.

**Walk**

Capitano’s walk and run was also very important to the makeup of the character, he has a “mountain walk” a heel to toe walk that gives bounce to his step. He walks with his head held high so he appears on top of the world with his head in the clouds. His actual steps though are small (Rudlin 121). When he is frightened he drops everything and “runs on the spot”, with his “head thrown back, arms in the air, kicking and howling” or he shrinks little by little until he is as unnoticeable as possible (Rudlin 121).

**Relationships**

Capitano sustained relationships with some of the other commedia characters, but was not necessarily associated with a family; he sometimes appears as Pantelone’s son, or as a “bosom friend of one of the sympathetic young lovers (Nicoll 101). He acts as a suitor from time to time and actually wins the lady in question affections, for example Flaminia (101-102). In (a scenario from *The* *Old Twins)* “**Captain Spavento enters, exclaiming his love for Flaminia. Arlecchino says that he suspect that she is in love with someone else. That is not possible says the Captain, because he is a man of such perfection”** (Scala 4). Capitano is also connected to Flaminia in (a scenario from *The Dentis)t* where Flaminia “**from her window has seen the Captain, whom she loves. She pleads for him to return her love”** (86). He is also associated with II Dottore, he is not threatened by Dottore because he recognizes him to be as made up as himself, but is instead threatened by Pedrolino who has a knowledge and understanding of life that is sincere (Rudlin 122). He is also associated with Arlecchino and Columbina. Capitano is wary of Arlecchino because Arlecchino is witty and Columbina mostly uses Capitano to humiliate Arlecchino. Arlecchino and Capitono also appear together in many scenarios where Arlecchino is his servant. In (a scenario from *The Betrothed)* “**the Captain and Arlecchino enter in disguise and armed with short weapons. Seeing Flaminia and Pedrolino, they tell them that they are musicians who have come to play at their wedding”** (Scala 76).

**Principal Capitanos**

The Capitano character was played by several actors during the 1500’s to 1600’s.

1550-1624 Francesco Andreini played Capitan Spavento della Valle Inferna.

1560 Fabrizio De Fornaris played Cap. Cocodrillo.

1600 Girolamo Garavini played Cap. Rinoceronte.

1618 Mondor played Rodomont.

1628 Silvio Fiorillo played Cap. Matamoros.

1639 Guiseppe Bianchi played Cap. Spezzafer.

1658 Ancatoni Diego played Cap. Sangue y Fuego (Duchartre 246).

**Lazzi**

Capitano is a part of several Lazzis. These were used in order to capture and keep his audience’s attention and to keep them entertained. Some examples of Lazzi’s Capitano was involved in are: Lazzi of the Sack- where Capitano is tricked into hiding in a sack, and is then delivered to the butcher “whose sounds of delight and knife flourishing frightens” Capitano (Gordon 14). Another Lazzi is the “Lazzo of the innocent bystander”- where Pedrolino and Arlecchino meet each other armed, where they proceed to heap abuse on each other. Capitano interferes and ends up on the receiving end of each of their blows (Gordon 15). This tells us that often times Capitano is a made a fool by the other commedia characters, and is abused frequently by the other characters when they get a chance.

**Modern Comedy**

In modern comedies and books, the Capitano character still lives on. The different personalities that make up the Capitano character can be seen in almost every comedy one could watch, whether it be a movie, a sitcom or even commercials. In *Green Hornet* the character Britt makes for a good modern day Capitano, he is a lazy incompetent person, who boast of his awesomeness and takes credit for the work his sidekick did. It is even obvious in some of the popular books that are read today such as the *Harry Potter* books, in which the character Draco is one who bullies people and puts on the tough guy act, but always ends up running away or hiding at any sign of real danger.

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