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In 2015, a monograph in Polish entitled *Komedia dell'arte* (*Commedia dell'arte*) was published for the first time, and fulfilled the interpretation gaps on the phenomenon of the 'artistic craft' of the *dell'arte* theatre. It is an interesting interdisciplinary work on the immanent features of the poetics of the *commedia dell'arte* genre (in Italy, France and Poland), which is part of the canon of the European theatre at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries.

In an extensive introduction, the author presented an outline of the polyvalent stage world of *commedia dell'arte*, which is cultural and linguistic in character, and signalled the essence of the studied phenomenon of *commedia dell'arte* in Italy, divided into a series of 'polises' and states.

The layout of the whole work, written flawlessly in Polish, which is rare in neophilologists, is coherent. It resembles a 'medieval triptych' and includes three chapters: two theoretical-analytical, and the third one, which becomes the link connecting the first part with the second. It constitutes a varied exemplification material in the form of many selected and today forgotten performances of *commedia dell'arte*, treatises and program manifestos that refer to polemics and even

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'struggles' with the Church for a new formula of the Italian comedy in politically, socially and religiously divided Italy.

In the introduction, the author takes as a starting point the definition of the assumed phenomenon of *commedia dell'arte* as a certain medium in reading or (re)interpreting the ludic aspect of the Italian stage phenomenon. She focuses her attention on many variants of the analysed phenomenon, to which she critically refers, while stressing comic effects in *dell'arte* performances and the use of music and acting.

Consequently, the first chapter of the monograph rediscovers man as an actor and a director of a theatrical performance, the famous 'capocomico' in the Italian *commedia dell'arte*, and the family of *dell'arte* actors: Bibiena, Andreini, Cecchini and Biancolelli, as well as theatre groups, such as Fedeli or Accerbi.

The author emphasises the process of formation of wandering theatre groups that travel across Europe, the selection of the theatre repertoire and the place of theatre staging – from the market square to the palace theatres of Venice, Verona, Mantua, or Rome. However, the undisputable protagonist of all changes is the actor, his stage craft and a new stage character that he creates. The actor plays here, as the author rightly emphasises, an important role and constitutes a link in the stage creative process. As a result, a different picture of an unknown actor emerges, an intellectual in the person of Ruzante, Sacchi or Gian Battista Andreini. It is worth emphasising that two essential components are intersecting each other, namely, the word of the actor, as an expression of the intellectual and his acrobatic skills along with the expression of the body and movement on the stage. This is one of the original components of the Italian concept of acting. The actor on stage is supposed to entertain and teach, as well as to make the audience laugh and scold it, as done by the famous Harlequin – jester. After all, jesters are funny, and their actions lead to short flashes of a happy mess, followed either by a return to the established order or to a complete revolution. The jester entertains and makes people laugh, breaks taboos and is free, sometimes frightening and threatening, fights for dignity and freedom of speech. Thus, he becomes a determinant of wisdom and stupidity, controls order and chaos, which is reflected in selected fragments of *commedia dell'arte* performances, as well as in the second and third part of the monograph.

The author skilfully uses methodological tools and emphasises the phenomenon of theatricalisation of the characters-masks in *commedia dell'arte* and their transformation, she refers to the play of words at the level of the language of the characters from *commedia dell'arte*, and thus to the elements that give rise to the direct effect of tensions and emotions, tendency to moralising, and even dislike, indignation with certain behavioural norms.

The final chapters of the first part of the monograph are particularly noteworthy, as they are interesting from the point of view of ideological polemics regarding the new form and structure of comedy in the era of the counter-reformation, program repertoire, and above all due to the presence of women, great actresses on Italian and European theatre stages, including Orsola Cecchini and Isabella Andreini.

The second chapter of the monograph reflects everything that characterises the essence of *commedia all'italiana*: it presents close links with the theatrical and folk tradition of *commedia dell'arte* in Italy and Europe, based on the orality of the message, and not on the written text.

The author of the monograph discusses the typology of characters-mask from *commedia dell'arte*, paying attention to their anthropological features, visible for instance in Harlequin or Pulcinella.

In a detailed way she points to the essential elements characteristic of the stage architecture: stage designs of palaces and market *dell'arte* theatre performances, listing the variants of the stage, emphasising its perspective and the essence of the so-called 'intermezzi', singing, music and dance.

Monika Surma-Gawłowska included in the book many colourful and black-and-white pictures of stage characters and *dell'arte* actors from European collections, which increases the rank of the monograph and gives it a new European dimension.

The author of the monograph focused on the art of comedy improvisation, on the motifs of *commedia dell'arte*, the language of *commedia all'italiana* and literary comedy, tragicomedy and the so-called 'Arcadian' pastoral drama, enjoying great popularity among directors and audiences. This chapter emphasises the author's in-depth knowledge of the subject matter.

The third chapter of the book refers to a differentiated and ordered exemplification material, which constitutes a compendium of knowledge about theatre program manifestos. It also includes other documents regarding epistology and theatre performances barely known to the Polish public.

The language of this chapter is communicative and understandable, which makes various texts a rich source of knowledge about the culture and theatre of Italian and European times of *commedia dell'arte*. The author's competences in the sphere of translation studies can be clearly seen, as the translator should formulate a 'new text' on the basis of the source text, using many strategies to overcome cultural barriers.

The 'new text' by Monika Surma-Gawłowska becomes, on the one hand, clear and logical, it is intended for the recipients of another cultural area; on the other hand, it is one that functions in new cultural conditions, like the source text.

We can see the author's professional and linguistic competence in the difficult process of translating the texts of *commedia dell'arte*.

A necessary and indispensable key to the application of the new language and theatrical burden in the translated texts is a broad knowledge of the linguistic and cultural realities of the translated authors, which the translator did not forget and fulfilled the task perfectly.

That is why the subject of the work is original and important for Polish theatrologists and Italianists, and the scope of the conducted research is wide and well-documented.

Translated from Polish by Katarzyna Rogalska-Chodecka