

**Dennis Murphy presents**

Commedia

# Commedia dell'Arte

**with traditional masks & puppets**



## **NSW DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

A thoroughly entertaining and instructive performance using mime, mask and puppetry. Dennis Murphy...introduces students to a range of classical Commedia characters. The performance then uses puppets to depict these characters in authentic amusing skits. Pupil involvement develops naturally during the performance. A must for drama students. Awarded Frater Award for Excellence in 2007

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## REVIEWS

"Dennis Murphy is one of the worlds' finest glove puppeteers."

L'UNITA, Rome

"There is no doubting this puppeteer's experience and skill. The wit, the timing, the handling, and the immediacy of his responses to the audience reflect a machinery well-honed."

The Australian Puppeteer Magazine

## THE PERFORMER

Dennis' puppetry has won him widespread acclaim in Australia and the 'Ural Citation' for excellence in Russia. In Italy he presents his shows in Italian and has performed in a wide variety of venues from atop the medieval walls of Treviso to an outdoor fair in the shadows of Juliet's castle. Dennis represented Australia at the 1998 'Teatri del Mondo Festival' in Italy. He commutes regularly to Italy to perform at puppet festivals and to carry out research. The theatre critic of Rome's L'UNITA newspaper called him "one of the world's greatest puppeteers". Over the last decade Dennis has shared his passion for the "Commedia dell'Arte" tradition with tens of thousands of Australian school children.

### (A) THE PERFORMANCE – Commedia dell'Arte, Masks & Puppets

**Commedia dell'Arte** was a form of Italian Mask Theatre based on strong characters and improvisation. It played an important role in the history of theatre and especially comedy. In this show, mask artist and puppeteer **Dennis Murphy** traces **Commedia's** development from the early charlatans in the market squares, through its heyday to its decline and current revival.

Dennis demonstrates traditional **Commedia** techniques and gives examples of those still in use in classic TV sitcoms like "**The Nanny**", "**Seinfeld**" and "**The Simpsons**". Students will be introduced to four of the principal characters from the **Commedia dell'Arte**.

**Pantalone:** the elderly miser.

**Il Capitano:** the braggart but cowardly soldier.

**Il Dottore:** the pedant descended from charlatans.

**Arlecchino:** the mischievous but lovable servant.

Dennis demonstrates "Grammelot", the art of speaking gibberish used by the performers when they travelled abroad. The show also features a classic Commedia skit from the puppetry branch of the tradition still to be found in Italy today. Volunteers from the audience will be given the opportunity to come up on stage to wear a mask and have a go at characterisation under Dennis' direction.

### (B) THE COMMEDIA DELL' ARTE PUPPETEER – a follow-on to the above show or a general introduction to Commedia.

This fast paced, highly energetic programme emphasises the Puppetry side of the Commedia dell'Arte tradition. The puppetry segment is based on the exuberant style of the street performers of 16<sup>th</sup> Century Italy.

After an introduction featuring the Mask tradition, Dennis enters the "baracca", the glove puppeteer's striped booth, for a rendition of "Arlecchino's Sister Act". It's a comedy that uses two devices loved by audiences for hundreds of years: Disguise and Trickery.

The show allows for lots of participation as the audience tries to help Arlecchino out of trouble. It is filled with action and witty asides that hold the interest of even the most skeptical "Oh not a puppet show" student.

The lives of 16<sup>th</sup> century travelling puppeteers are explained. Dennis talks about their working conditions, the hazards of travel and the difficulties of accommodation. The puppeteer's lot is contrasted with that of the Mask artists.

## WORKSHOP

Using 20 masks supplied by Dennis, students explore the use of different body postures to portray characters.

<b>DURATION:</b> 55 minutes	<b>SUITABILITY:</b> Years K-6
<b>2009 PERFORMANCE COST</b> \$4.00 per student \$0.40 gst \$4.40 Total	<b>2009 PERFORMANCE MINIMUM 100 STUDENTS</b> \$400.00 per show \$ 40.00 gst \$440.00 Total
<b>2008 PERFORMANCE COST</b> \$3.50 per student \$0.35 gst \$3.85 Total	<b>2008 PERFORMANCE MINIMUM 100 STUDENTS</b> \$350.00 per show \$ 35.00 gst \$385.00 Total
<b>WORKSHOP: \$200 FLAT FEE (INC GST) FOR 40 STUDENTS MAXIMUM</b>	