

The Two Look-Alikes

Li Due Simili di Plauto

From a late 1500s Commedia dell'Arte scenario

Performed by the Boston Commedia Lab of Pazzi Lazzi Troupe
Directed by Chiara Durazzini

Sponsored by anonymous

Saturday, March 7, 2026 - 7:30 PM at SomArt at the Hive - Somerville, MA



Cast (in order of appearance):

Alex Suheck	Silvio
Elena Lori	Zanni
Andrea Flax	Flavia
Carmen Marsico	Franceschina
Francesca Barone	Ortentia
Alessia Dalsant	Pantalone
Matthew Martino	Capitano
Andi Dudziak	Sardellino/Dottor Galeno
Gerardo Vitagliano	Coviello

The project and the play. This performance marks the culmination of a laboratory exploration of Commedia dell'Arte, the vibrant Italian Renaissance theater tradition that forms the foundation of modern comedy. Under the guidance of Chiara Durazzini - co-founder and artistic director of the *Pazzi Lazzi Troupe* and a specialist in Commedia dell'Arte - nine actors have trained in the techniques of this theatrical form and developed an improvisation based on a late 1500s scenario.

Chiara translated the scenario from Italian into English from the Corsiniana collection in Rome.

Together with her colleague, Commedia dell'Arte scholar Jay A. Cross, she has been translating the entire collection of one hundred anonymous scenarios preserved in two manuscripts at the Biblioteca dei Lincei in Rome. The "canovaccio" presented today is number 11 in that collection. We chose it as the basis for this laboratory because its plot draws inspiration from Plautus' Latin comedy *The Menaechmi*, later adapted by both William Shakespeare and Carlo Goldoni. It is one of the most enduring comic structures: the tale of two long-lost brothers who, at last, find each other again.

About Commedia dell'Arte. Commedia dell'Arte is a particular kind of theatre that started in the Italian streets and "piazze" in the first part of the 1500s. In Medieval terms, the word "arte" means "craft", therefore implying performances by professional actors as distinguished from amateur actors who played in the courts of princes and kings throughout Europe. In fact, this is the first instance of professional theatre in the Western world. Within Commedia dell'Arte we also find women as actresses for the first time in theatre history. For each show, the touring troupes of actors used a "canovaccio" (a plot summary), but they didn't take the time to write the dialogue, which was improvised. The only non-improvised elements in the show were the lazzi. Lazzo means "trick", and was whatever could make the show more interesting or funnier to the public. All the scenarios had the same stock characters, only the story changed. Every troupe member during his/her life would always play the same character. The characters are archetypes, and are divided into men and women, old and young, noble and servant. To be quickly recognized, every character had its own costume and leather mask - although the Nobles and female characters did not wear masks.

In this particular scenario, we have some of the most famous stock characters: Pantalone, the stingy old man; Silvio and Falvia, the over-dramatic nobles; Franceschina, the witty maidservant; Capitano, the braggart soldier; Sardellino and Zanni, the funny servants; Coviello, an inn-keeper and cook, similar to the Neapolitan Pulcinella, and Ortentia, the smart courtesan.

The Company. *Pazzi Lazzi Troupe* is a professional theatre company founded in Boston in 2013 and under the artistic direction of Chiara Durazzini. The company strives to entertain and educate its audiences about the tradition of Commedia dell'Arte and Renaissance music. It has had the pleasure to perform, give presentations and teach workshops for numerous K-12 schools in the Boston area, and for organizations such as Harvard University, Brown University, Dartmouth College, Indiana University-Bloomington, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Clark Museum, and the Italian Cultural Institute in Washington DC, among the others. *Pazzi Lazzi* is also affiliated with *All'italiana – Boston Italian Theatre Company* which involves Italian speakers and Italian students in theatre labs and in staging shows by Italian playwrights. More info at www.pazzilazzitroupe.com

The Intermezzi. In classical Commedia dell'Arte dramaturgy, as exemplified by the scenario presented today, the progression of the action was divided by musical intermezzi between acts. This evening's program reflects that convention by incorporating three musical pieces.

Performance by Carmen Marsico on voice, Alex Suheck on classical guitar and Gerardo Vitagliano on acoustic guitar.

Fontana che dai acqua (music & lyrics by Gian Domenico da Nola, Napoli 1510-1592 ca.)

La pansé (music by F. Rendine & lyrics by G. Pisano, 1953)

A lieta vita (music & lyrics by Giovanni Giacomo Gastoldo, 1555-1609)

Special Thanks. *Pazzi Lazzi troupe* is deeply grateful to the wonderful students who generously contributed their time and resources to bring this project to life.

The show runs one hour with no intermission. Post-show Q&A session with the actors and the director to follow.