



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM - UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA
Dipartimento di Filologia Classica e Italianistica

To the Evaluation Committee
of the PhD Graduate Program
at the State University of Yerevan – Armenia

Bologna, 24th June, 2024.

Dear Colleagues, dear Members of the Evaluation Committee,

It gives me great pleasure to provide this committee with an opinion on the thesis of Ani Hambarzumyan, a former student of mine in the Italian Studies course at the University of Bologna and now a candidate for a doctorate at the State University of Yerevan.

Unfortunately, I was unable to read the thesis in your beautiful language, of which I have little competence, but whose cultural depth and links to music, visual and performing arts I have always admired. And it is precisely to the performing arts that Ani Hambarzumyan's work is dedicated. She addresses the problem of the permanence of the practice of 'Commedia dell'arte' in modernist and twentieth-century Italian theatre.

The thesis starts from the historical, not to say archetypal, root of the idea of the mask, as it was reinterpreted and developed in the theatrical theory and practice of Luigi Pirandello, the most translated and most performed Italian author in the world.

From the formation of the first itinerant theatre companies and the affirmation of the first traditional Italian masks - Brighella, Pantalone, Harlequin in the north, Pulcinella and many others in the south - the thesis arrives at the development of the reform of European theatre in the 18th century brought about by Carlo Goldoni and Carlo Gozzi, which proceeded in different and sometimes contrastive paths, even thanks to the cultural influence of the great composers of opera buffa, such as Giovanni Battista Pergolesi and, later, Domenico Cimarosa.

In its overall structure, the thesis demonstrates an excellent ability to consider the Commedia dell'arte as a broad cultural phenomenon, involving several disciplines and different competences.

In this sense, Ani Hambarzumyan demonstrates a great knowledge not only of the specialised bibliography on Italian popular theatre, but also a great originality in tracing some fundamental features of 16th- and 18th-century performance practice in modern and contemporary theatre, from Pirandello to Dario Fo.



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The second chapter of the thesis is dedicated to the reworking of the *Commedia dell'arte* in Pirandello's theatre. Here, Ani Hambardzumyan demonstrates considerable competence and sensitivity, both on the endless bibliography regarding Pirandello, and on aspects of Pirandello's theory of humor and performative language that reveal traits of great originality.

The third chapter explores a very important figure, and unjustly neglected by academic criticism, such as that of Ettore Petrolini, a brilliant comic actor and theater writer, who can almost be defined as the forerunner of contemporary "stand-up comedy", and who mixed in his performances the roots of popular theater and the most elaborate forms of nonsense and absurd that characterized the European twentieth century. Also in this case, the reading offered by Ani Hambardzumyan is full of originality and food for thought that Italian critics have not yet fully elaborated. The position of Petrolini in the cultural Italian context is revised with an outstanding sense of the semiotics of cultures, where an apparently insulated phenomenon has broad consequences on a totally different field of representation.

Overall, for these and other reasons which it would be too long to mention here, I am happy to state that Ani Hambardzumyan's doctoral thesis should be classified at an excellent level for me, if compared with the numerous Italian, European, North and South American doctoral theses that I have had the opportunity to supervise in the past years, in Bologna and other universities.

I particularly appreciated the passion and dedication of this young scholar towards Italian and European culture, and I hope that this meeting opportunity can be fruitful for further scientific collaborations between our two institutions.

Sincerely,



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