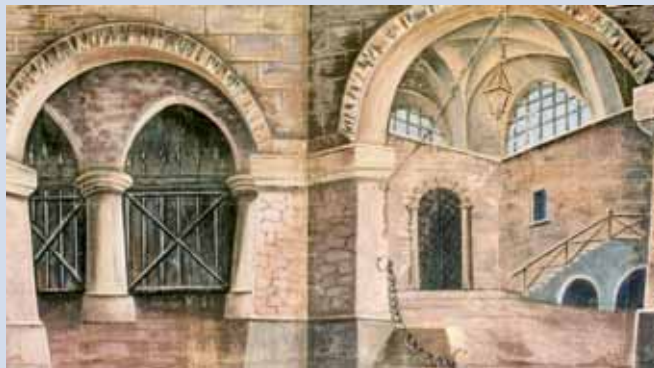




Characters

Brighella

Brighella is Harlequin's antagonist and the earliest Zanni in the *Commedia dell'Arte* – the joker and main character of the comic stories before the xvi century –, a role which he enriches with the new characteristics of intelligence and cleverness. «Nomen est omen»: a quarrelsome and gossipy trickster, he is insolent with those who are under his direction, but extremely obsequious to his masters; he works in fact as a cook, a waiter, or a butler. Brighella is very proud of his costume, a sort of livery which symbolises that he belongs to his master; he wears a pair of loose pants and a smock, both white with green trim, a puff hat also trimmed in green, and a half-mask which covers his bearded face. Thanks to his uniform, Brighella can impose his power upon minions. His full name is Brighella Cavicchio Gandon.



The Baron Fernando

The Baron Fernando is one of the characters in the comedy *Fagiolino barbiere dei morti* (Fagiolino the Barber of the Dead) – also entitled *Il castello misterioso* (The Mysterious Castle) – which is a classical piece in puppet repertoires and was already performed in the XIX century.

The leading character is Fagiolino who must spend the night in a castle where the rooms are infested with the presence

of the Baron Fernando, the former owner of the place who had been condemned by a magician to skeleton form until he could find a man bold enough to shave him. Fagiolino manages to perform the task so breaking the spell and he becomes the owner of the castle and all its treasures.

The play's original title leads one to think of a possible derivation of the comedy subject from the ancient role of the barber which often implied a direct contact with cadavers: not only did barbers shave the dead in order to tidy them up, but they carried out simple surgical functions and, in some cases, also acted as medical examiner. A

barber was in fact amongst those who, while examining a dead body, diagnosed one of the first plague cases in Milan (an historical episode which was to be described by Manzoni in *I promessi sposi* (The Betrothed)).



Flemma

Flemma is a minor character amongst the wooden-headed puppets invented in Bologna. Created by the puppeteer Cuccioli in 1875, the character is a simpleton who can easily be reduced to tears and who is only suitable to serve as a supporting character. He can be recognised from his almost toothless mouth, a high service cap, a nasal voice, the mispronunciation of the “s” – which he turns into “z”, and the fixed expression he uses every time he is laughed at or beaten by the other characters, which is “*Al vagh a dir a la mi mama*” (dialect)(I’ll tell my mum on you!)

