

# **The Memory Theatre of Giulio Camillo**

by Matthew Maguire

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### Preface

Giulio Camillo was one of the most famous men of the 16th century. With a commission of 1200 ducats from the King of France, Francois I, he created a theatre that contained divine powers: whoever entered the theatre would emerge with a complete memory of all the knowledge that had ever existed. According to Erasmus "the architecture is of wood, marked with many images and full of little boxes... he calls this theatre of his by many names saying that it is a built or constructed mind and soul." In June 1526 Francois inaugurated the League of Cognac with Venice, Milan, Genoa, Florence, and the Papacy. Its declared purpose was to liberate Italy from the Emperor. So Camillo was practicing his art of memory during a time of war.

I have long been interested in the creation of architectural models of mental states, so I was immediately drawn to Camillo when I first read his story in Frances Yates' book *The Art of Memory*. A meditation upon memory is necessary for the present moment: a time in which America is slipping again into moral amnesia and the accompanying degradation of language is like an epidemic of aphasia.

"I feel very strongly about not reawakening the memories of the past." Ronald Reagan, *The New York Times* March 21, 1985.

Americans cherish "freedom" yet tolerate their government's "constructive engagement" with South Africa whose policy of apartheid can easily be compared to those of Hitler's and Stalin's. In the past year nearly one thousand blacks have died in South Africa and in August Reagan called the Botha government "reformist." Americans believe in due process of law yet tolerate the illegal interventions of the U.S. in Nicaragua. The contras, many of whom are ex-members of deposed dictator Somoza's National Guard, are called "Freedom Fighters" and likened to our own founding fathers by Reagan. Why have we forgotten what we learned in the last two decades? Why have we forgotten the meaning of our common language?

"The struggle of men against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting."  
Milan Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*

*The Memory Theatre of Giulio Camillo* asks the question: How is the motion of the memory connected with the motion of history? How is the personal political? It is the story of a man with perfect memory who is haunted by the memory of a murder he may have committed. As he searches his memory he is confronted by events that he denies. Amnesia begins to set in as his denials grow until the mind of a man who could focus his entire memory in a single moment is in danger of shattering.

History...is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake. -James Joyce, *Ulysses*

*The Memory Theatre* is structured as a play within a play within a play. The surface of the play takes place within a single performance in Camillo's Memory Theatre in Venice in 1532. It is his first performance in seven years of his memory play and he intends it be his final one. Within his memory a commedia troupe performs their own bawdy version of his play. Erupting out of the rift in his memory is the Umbra, the darkest region of shadows, in which the Beast claws and mangles. Camillo is the only figure who penetrates all three worlds.

## **Characters**

### **Giulio Camillo**

An architect and a mystic. A professor from Bologna intent upon combining the classical Greek art of memory with the Egyptian Hermetic philosophies and the Cabala. He is able to focus his entire memory in a single moment. He stammers. He is a man who does not sleep but drifts.

### **Alessandro Citolini**

A colleague of Camillo's from Bologna, a mathematician, he thinks like an abacus. He will end his life in England as a Protestant exile. Historically, he was accused of stealing texts from Camillo. His "Tipocosmia" was much like the Memory Theatre with the exception that he used no imagery; the Memory Theatre rationalized. Wracked with guilt he suffers from severe itching of the palms.

### **Beatrice Ficino**

The daughter of Marsilio Ficino, the translator of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, a large body of Egyptian Philosophy that strongly influences her. She is Camillo's mistress. They met at a public demonstration of a Camera Obscura. Her area of scholarship is the nature of light and shadow. She suffers from acrophobia.

### **Zerbinetta della Mirandola**

A professional performer engaged by Camillo to help in the staging of the Memory Theatre. The prompter. The swift acrobat. The daughter of Pico della Mirandola, the man who created a popularization of the Jewish Cabala in a Christianized form. Camillo has complete trust in her. She has an impacted will to power.

### **The Commedia Troupe, a slightly sinister commedia**

**Pantalone:** Played by Camillo as an alter ego, a priapic greedy miser.

**Arlequino:** The sly booby.

**Columbina:** The soubrette, the mischievous maid.

**Isabella:** The young, spoiled and unhappy wife of Pantalone, an arranged marriage (for the dowry) never consummated.

## **The Umbra**

### **The Schismatic**

A fragment of Camillo. The accuser. Like a soul in Dante's *Inferno* caught in a limbo in which his soul and his body never join. An epileptic.

**Francois I:** King of France. Patron of Camillo.

### **The Amnesiac**

The woman with no face. She has a mechanical appearance like a clock-works that is revealed by the opening of a door in the area of her belly. She suffers from aphasia.

### **The Beast**

A Man/Beast with the head of a wild boar, tusks flaring. "The Great Beast that comes from the sea...the Anti-Christ...He is about to come. The millennium is past. We await him" (Alinardo of Grottaferrata). In Egyptian mythology the beast stalks the shadows of Camillo's psyche, and in a very real sense the Beast is Camillo himself. The Beast as the center which does not hold.

## **Act I**

Scene 1	Memory	I was crossing a bridge.
Scene 2	Lazzi	I saw a commedia troupe on the opposite shore.
Scene 3	Memory	I felt a pull between us like gravity.
Scene 4	Umbra	I saw one of them, Columbina, strike Arlequino with a mallet for his thievery.
Scene 5	Memory	I was searching for my memory.
Scene 6	Lazzi	I was laughing even as my skin was crawling.
Scene 7	Memory	The ship was sailing.

## **Bridge 1**

## **Act II**

Scene 8	Memory	I remember a room, a pure room.
Scene 9	Umbra	The King of France had offered me 1200 ducats.

Scene 10	Lazzi	Every object stood out in sharp relief, their boundaries. Shining.
Scene 11	Memory	I was standing in the center of the bridge.
Scene 12	Lazzi	Venice was at war with the Emperor.
Scene 13	Umbra	The King believes it is a just war.
Scene 14	Memory	I was trying to trace the scent of death.

## Bridge 2

## Act III

Scene 15	Umbra	Am I pure from sin? Yes. It was not my hand.
Scene 16	Memory	I will focus my entire memory in a single moment.
Scene 17	Umbra	A line of monks was chanting the Dies Irae.
Scene 18	Umbra	Oh God in Heaven, I've struck him.
Scene 19	Lazzi	No, I deny it.
Scene 20	Memory	I am silent.
Scene 21	Umbra	I will devise a way to leave this earth.

## Prologue Part I

In the sleeping chamber of Camillo and Beatrice. Camillo is kneeling by the bed, his head in his hands. Beatrice is listening.

Camillo I can't sleep....

(Pause)

Beatrice Come back to bed.

Camillo It haunts me.

Beatrice What?

Camillo I've lost a memory ...

Beatrice Please it's cold, come back--

Camillo Don't you understand, for seven years I haven't slept.

Beatrice Stop it.

Camillo It's running from me because I run from it...

Beatrice (taking his head in her hands) Again. (he does not respond) Again.

Camillo (slowly picking his way through his memory)

I was crossing a bridge.

I saw a commedia troupe on the opposite shore.

I felt a pull between us like gravity.

I saw one of them, Columbina, strike Arlequino with a mallet for his thievery.

I was searching for my memory.

I was laughing even as my skin was crawling.

The ship was sailing.

I remember a room, a pure room.

The King of France had offered me 1200 ducats.

Every object stood out in sharp relief, their boundaries shining.

I was standing in the center of the bridge.

Venice was at war with the Emperor.

The King believes it is a just war.

I was trying to trace the scent of death.

Am I pure from sin? Yes. It was not my hand.

I will focus my entire memory in a single moment.

(Blackout)

## **Prologue Part 2**

In the chambers of Françoise. The commedia troupe in command performance. As they enter one at a time they cabriole center stage. The curtains open on a small antechamber revealing the King. They bow deeply in unison.

All Il Re di Francia.

The King tosses a ducat. Isabella scrambles to retrieve it. They bow again even more elaborately, their voices approaching melody.

All Il Re di Francia.

The King tosses a second ducat which Columbina scoops up in a swan dive. They bow again, their voices in full song.

All Il Re di Francia!!!

The King tosses a third ducat which Arlequino nimbly snatches out of the air just above Pantalone's cupped palms. The King beckons to Columbina to join him inside the antechamber. Not knowing how to refuse, she begins to protest angrily but

Pantalone stifles her with the force of a steel trap. Columbina sits on the King's lap. He removes her mask. She is numb with terror. The curtains close. Her arm shoots through the curtains entreating help. Her arm disappears again as if it were being wrenched off. The others must acquiesce. Pantalone rushes them off with sharp hissing sounds like an angry gander. The lights go to black.

## **Scene 1      I Was Crossing a Bridge**

Memory #1

Object: Rialto Bridge

As the sound of the psaltrie fades, Camillo enters a narrow beam of light downstage. He carries a scale model of the Rialto Bridge in his hands.

Camillo      I have not performed my memory play for seven years.

An age, a dark age.

My decision to perform it again is not one I would have made if it had not been thrust upon me.

My name is Giulio Camillo.

The greatest challenge I ever faced awaits me.

I am (he stutters) abbbout to focus my entire memory in a single moment.

You will see it.

If not ... then ... you may never,

for I fear my memory has begun to drift and erode.

I (stutters) bbbuilt this theatre

and it contains a memory of everything I have ever known, but somewhere hidden in it is a beast who at night claws and mangles.

You will see my memory because I will (stutters) pplay it out ... here .... for you ... as a spectacle

even as I search and chart it inch by inch.

Allow me to introduce my associates:

Zerbinetta della Mirandola (the light comes up on Zerbinetta as she enters with a miniature of the moon belted with jewels in her arms)... Beatrice Ficino (the lights comes up on Beatrice as she enters with a coil of rope in her hands) ... Alessandro Citolini (the light comes up on Alessandro as he enters) ...

We will enter the labyrinth.

But first I will tell you what I told my final audiences: (lifting his foot in a gesture) I was crossing a bridge.

Camillo stands motionless, his legs suspended, while Alessandro takes the moon from Zerbinetta who, with Beatrice, draws a line across the water pool by laying in it a length of rope.

Camillo      Dimonstrazione of Bridge and Memory.

Just as a bridge is a span between two points in space, so is a memory a span between two points in time.

At this point Zerbinetta and Beatrice suddenly pivot and, arching their backs to one another, pull the rope taut so that a fine spray of water flies up leaving a rapidly undulating line that resolves when static to pure line. Alessandro crosses slowly upstage of the line, parallel to it, beyond the time in which the image dissolves. Beatrice exits with the rope. Zerbinetta kneels next to the water pool. Camillo places the Rialto Bridge within the pinspot on the centerpost and exits swiftly to the inner room. Beatrice enters with a bucket of mud and crosses to Zerbinetta who takes it from her. Beatrice exits as the curtains open revealing Camillo. Beatrice enters the inner room and places a white cowl and a blindfold on Camillo. Zerbinetta forms a ball of mud in her hands. Alessandro exits and reenters with an abacus. He takes a position to analyze the Dimonstrazione.

Camillo      Dimonstrazione of Sin.

Zerbinetta hurls the ball of mud at the white cowl covering Camillo's chest. It splatters on his white chest like sin on the soul: 'the staining'. Alessandro charts it analytically with his abacus. Camillo remains motionless as the curtains close concealing him. Alessandro approaches Zerbinetta in an impulse to touch her but his movement is so repressed by tension that he seems to be performing a paralytic St. Vitus' dance. She kneels absolutely motionless except for her eyes, which watch him, not quite comprehending. He attempts to stroke her face when he is close enough. Her eyes close with a sharp intake of breath. As his fingers touch her cheek, he begins to convulse. Unable to control his convulsions he recoils and flees in mortification. Camillo enters. Zerbinetta quickly rises and attempts to cover her confusion by the rapid execution of her task, neutralizing the stage by removing the contaminating mud. Camillo crosses to the Rialto Bridge and lifts it from the center post.

Camillo      The Beast will come from the water beneath the bridge. I await him.

The curtains open revealing a grid of shelves inset within the window frame, nine squares, each containing an object. This field of objects is a visual Dimonstrazione of the nature of objects of the memory. It plays on our innate propensities for visual alphabets.

Camillo places the bridge in the empty center square. He steps to the side to view his memory objects. As he gazes at them, one object, the Pantalone puppet, jars a memory. He reaches for it. As he lifts it, Alessandro enters and places the moon in the Heavens. As Alessandro exits, Camillo, with the puppet in his hands, turns to the audience.



## Scene 2 I Saw a Commedia Troupe on the Opposite Shore

Lazzi #1

Object: Mercury's foot

Camillo I saw a commedia troupe on the opposite shore.

As he exits he does not see Columbina entering giving a spit shine to Mercury's foot. She places the foot on the center post and as she is leaving she sees the moon spinning in the heavens. She cries out with joy and rushes to get her mistress.

Columbina Ho visto!  
Isabella! Isabella!

Isabella Columbina! Columbina!!

They enter together on the run.

Columbina (pointing at the moon) Ho visto sull'altra sponda! (I saw the opposite shore)

Isabella Ho visto la mia memoria! (I saw my memory)

### THE LAZZO OF FLYING TO THE MOON

Isabella leaps forward into an arabesque elongé trying to reach the moon. Columbina grabs her leg to prevent her from falling into the heavens.

Columbina Isabella!!!

Columbina pulls Isabella 'back to earth'. Isabella stomps her feet and demands that Columbina retrieve the Moon for her.

Isabella Columbina. Al Centro.

Columbina No! (She waves her arms in violent protest)  
No! (less violent)  
No (she begins to notice her arms are like wings)  
Nooo (Isabella mirroring her movements they begin to notice that they could fly to the moon)  
No...o..o (breaking up in joyous laughter they try their full wingspan in unison)

Columbina bends over and Isabella mounts her shoulders. They become a towering bird-like creature and start off. Isabella's wings flapping gracefully, towards the moon.

Isabella        Ho visto la mia memoria!

Isabella plucks the moon out of the heavens and as they fly back to earth they sing a song of celebration in harmony, one high, one low.

Colum. & Isa.        Stavo ridendo (I was laughing)  
                          Stavo ridendo  
                          Stavo ridendo  
                          Stavo ridendo  
                          Stavo ridendo

They reach the center and begin their dismount singing a laugh in unison, Isabella singing a descending scale. Columbina singing a split scale joining Isabella on the fifth note.

The singing laughter takes them out of the dismount and into a little dance of celebration (based upon dances of the period, a saraband or a pavane or a galliard) in a circular pattern. There are four rhythmic phrases. At the end of the first Isabella tosses the moon to Columbina amidst squeals of glee. At the end of the second Columbina tosses it back. At the end of the third, Isabella lofts it to Columbina sure that their romp will continue forever. But at the end of the fourth, Columbina, who has been sneaking out - stealing the moon, greets Isabella's demure curtsy with a rude flatulent razzing sound, and bolts. Isabella sputters and stomps.

Isabella        Columbina!!!

#### THE LAZZO OF THE OBJECT MONGER SELLING THE MOON

Hearing Isabella's distress, Arlequino and Pantalone rush in to rescue her. Arlequino bows grandly and takes her hand to kiss it. Her heart is aflutter. Pantalone sends Arlequino flying and makes his own deep bow, moving to slobber all over Isabella's hand. All of a sudden the moon pops through a crease in the curtain held by a disembodied hand. Arlequino (in collusion with Columbina) makes mystical levitational gestures toward the moon. It appears to float. Isabella grasps the ruse immediately and takes her part in duping Pantalone that the moon is actually floating as if it were still in the heavens and is for sale.

Columbina    L'altra sponda ... l'altra sponda ... l'altra sponda ... (the opposite shore)

Pantalone (bidding) Une cento.

Columbina (coming through the curtain amazed and outraged at Pantalone's miserly bid) Une cento!?!?!?!?!?

Isabella (prevailing upon him with implied rewards) Pantalone...

Pantalone Due cento.

Columbina Due cento!!!! (in protest she begins to exclaim what the King of France had offered her) Il Re di Francia ...

Arlequino, Pantalone, and Columbina break in here and form a chorus with Columbina singing as before.

All (facing out) Il Re di Francia. (they restore)

Columbina Il Re di Francia m'ha offerto milleduecento ducati.

Pantalone (laughing with disbelief he exclaims) Milleduecento ducati!!!!

Columbina (accepting his exclamation as a bid she grabs his hand and raises it like a champion's) Si! Milleduecento ducati!!

Pantalone does a sharp take and then a slow burn but the lascivious sound of Isabella's voice soothes him and he decides to come forth. Desiring no one to discover the location of his money he strides cautiously to down center where admonishing the audience to secrecy with some pleasurable effort extracts a huge coin from his hyperbolic codpiece. Arlequino and Isabella have unbeknownst to Pantalone crept up backwards behind him arching backwards to spy on him. They manage to dart back to their previous positions just before he turns brandishing his beloved coin. He kisses it goodbye. Columbina snatches it out of his hand and drops the moon with a thud at his feet. The others all cabriole and bolt, leaving Pantalone puzzled but gloating over his prize.

### **Scene 3 I Felt a Pull Between Us Like Gravity**

Memory #2

Object: Right angle plumbline

Pantalone bends to refloat the moon but now it is as if the moon weighs a thousand pounds. He tries once, twice, accompanied by sound effects, on the third try he is able to slowly raise it, with massive effort, to his chest. He begins a

metamorphosis from the twisted and stooped stance of Pantalone. He rises to full height. He lifts Pantalone's mask from his face revealing an intensely concentrated Camillo. He moves the mask away from his face - arm's length - and back again, and away again, and back again, and away, as if the pull of gravity existed between him and the mask.

Camillo (without breaking the connection with the mask) I felt a pull between us like gravity.

Still resisting the pull of the mask he backs off the stage. Columbina enters reaching for the winged foot and does a slow and sustained forward walkover to the center post. She flies the foot out. It reappears flying over the set and as it banks to begin its descent the curtains open revealing the memory cabinet, a nine-square grid of multi-colored doors. It is as if Mercury's foot had flown into the memory cabinet. Camillo enters with a right angle plumbline.

Camillo Dimonstrazione of the Construction of a Memory Theatre. Using the art of memory of Simonides I attach each image to a place.

He opens the center door revealing Arlequino working his omnivorous mouth.

Camillo When I want to summon a memory of that image I simply recall the place.

He opens a second door - top stage left - revealing Isabella in the violation of some small personal etiquette. She is startled, then rapidly composes herself. He then opens a third door - bottom stage right - revealing Columbina who blows him a kiss. As Camillo steps back to display the image, Columbina's hand darts out to grab at Camillo's crotch. He sidesteps the hand and stuffs it back into the cabinet slamming the door closed (he represses the memory). He hangs the plumbline on the center knob and addresses the audience.

Camillo The Memory Texts.

He opens the top center door to extract a text. Alessandro enters with a sextant to begin the next dimonstrazione. His cross down is arrested by the sight of Camillo scanning the text. Alessandro is drawn to look at the text over Camillo's shoulder. Camillo notices and folding his body about the text rolls the scroll back up and shuts it away. Alessandro backs off a step. Camillo moves to the top S.R. door and extracts a second text, unrolling it, his back to Alessandro who seems compelled to see the text. He places his hand on Camillo's shoulder to forward his desire. Camillo's whole demeanor stiffens. He rolls up the text. With a wave of the hand, Alessandro defers and returns to his position. Curtain. Beatrice is waiting next to Camillo with a guidepost.

Camillo      Dimonstrazione of the Placement of Memory Texts.

Camillo drops the rolled text into the hollow core of the guidepost. Beatrice places the guidepost at the precise position D. R. Camillo and Alessandro prepare to take a sighting. Beatrice begins to exit but as she crosses the exact center of the stage she is caught in an invisible vortex. She spins violently for a moment and collapses unconscious. Alessandro is thrown back as if by a great gust of wind. Camillo rushes to Beatrice and lifts her into his arms where she regains consciousness. She convinces him that she is all right. As they part he spontaneously clasps and kisses her hand. Camillo restores the guidepost to its U.S.R. position and waves the reluctant Alessandro off from the completion of the dimonstrazione. Alessandro exits U.L. Camillo crosses down to address the audience. Before he has finished announcing the next dimonstrazione, Beatrice, Zerbinetta, and Alessandro enter with a swooping motion in a vertical line on the center file. They each hold a grammar panel in front of their face, illustrating a degree of shadow. Beatrice - white, Zerbinetta - grey, Alessandro - black.

Camillo      Dimonstrazione of Shadows

There are three distinct regions of shadows (backing upstage the right angle plumblin in his hands, pausing just outside the gap between the grey and the black)

We are interested in the darkest region, (he steps into the gap.)

The Umbra.

Beatrice and Zerbinetta peel off rapidly right and left revealing Camillo in front of the black panel. He raises the angle over his head as an apex. The music becomes dark but changes again as Zerbinetta enters with a field of seven suns which drive away the shadow. Camillo kneels and takes a sighting of the field of suns. The curtains open revealing a silver chalice later to be seen as the cup of amnesia. Zerbinetta exits S.R. with the suns. Camillo, standing, holds the plumblin above the cup as the light begins to change subtly. He withdraws and exits. This is the beginning of an image called twilight. The cup is in its own pinspot and the inner chamber is lit as sunset. The lights go to black in a 25 second fade. Curtain.

**Scene 4      I Saw One of Them, Columbina, Strike Arlequino with a Mallet for his Thievery**

Umbra #1

Object: The Pyramid

The scene is a nightmare: the music becomes dissonant and haunting. As light comes up the Amnesiac is revealed wandering with the sun in her hand. Her masked face is blank as if all her features had been blurred and forgotten. In a series of jagged movements, half remembered, half forgotten, she places the Sun on the center post. She

attempts to memorize it. She spasms and is flying backwards. Laughing disjointedly she is drawn off the stage. Camillo appears with the Rialto Bridge in his hands. Formally, as in his first address to the audience:

Camillo        I saw one of them, Columbina, strike Arlequino with a mallet for his thievery.

Three huge gong-like sounds drive him like blows to the floor. The Schismatic, his masked face cut by an angry skeletal rift across the brow, enters with the Amnesiac. She carries a solid black pyramid., He stands U.S. of her and pressing his palms against her temples rotates her head so that he is framing her face for the audience. In a macabre imitation of Camillo he performs a *dimonstrazione*. His voice is a rasping *sotto voce*.

Schismatic    *Dimonstrazione. Dimonstrazione. Dimonstrazione* of the state of amnesia.

He lifts up a hollow frame of the pyramid away from its solid base to show a state of emptiness. The curtains open revealing the king who enters holding a death mask embedded in a block of mortar. The King holds the block up high and slowly pans it as if in evidence. The forehead of the death mask appears to have been crushed. As the King turns to exit the sound of monks chanting the *Dies Irae* is heard. The curtains close on the King departing. Camillo staggers to his feet.

Camillo        (rushing from the room) No, I deny it!!

A lone monk enters U.L. chanting the *Dies Irae*, his face hidden in his cowl. He crosses to the water pool and kneeling, cups his hands and lets it drift through the water. As he rises he stops chanting. His right arm shoots out from his robes revealing a claw. HE lifts his cowl exposing the flaring tusks and fiery eyes of the beast. HE slowly lifts the Sun to his shoulder and in a theft of the light he strides deliberately, with great weight, into the darkness.

## Scene 5        I Was Searching for My Memory

Memory #3

Object: The Psyaltrie

The sound of the psyaltrie is heard piercing the darkness. As light comes up Zerbinetta and Beatrice are entering. Beatrice is making sure her instrument is in tune for the coming *dimonstrazione*. Zerbinetta uncleats a thick hemp rope that drops vertically into the center of the space. Alessandro enters U.C., his hand to his brow in a gesture of formalized concentration. Camillo enters. Alessandro crosses to the rope.

Camillo      Dimonstrazione of Memory Rising.

Alessandro pulls himself with gasping effort to the top of the rope as Beatrice plays a melody on the psaltrie that resolves as he reaches the top. A momentary suspension. Handing the psaltrie to Camillo, Beatrice joins Zerbinetta in drawing the rope to a 45-degree angle S.R.

Camillo      Dimonstrazione of the Gravity of Memory.

Alessandro descends the rope hand over hand in violent, near falling, surges. As he reaches the floor he drops into a position staring back at the point from which he descended. Beatrice and Zerbinetta echo his line of sight and position. They are frozen as if momentarily transfixed. Alessandro exits. Beatrice exits for the rakes. Zerbinetta restores the rope. Camillo places the psaltrie on the centerpost in a pinspot and exits. Beatrice enters with two large rakes and hands one to Zerbinetta. The image is called "The Night of the Long Teeth." The curtains open revealing the Memory Cabinet with a beam of harsh white light flaring out a circular hole in the center. The voices of Camillo and Alessandro are heard in argument behind the memory cabinet. Sotto Voce.

Camillo      Cercavo (I was searching)

Alessandro    No l'ho smentisco (No, I deny it)

Camillo      Cercavo (I was searching)

Alessandro    Sono muto (I am silent)

Camillo      Sentivo una attrazione (I felt a pull)

Alessandro    Il fiuto della morte (The scent of Death)

Camillo      No l'ho smentisco (No, I deny it)

The argument repeats identically in angered shouting

Zerbinetta attempts to block the light but it is impossible. As the argument peaks the light is extinguished. The women sweep their rakes from on high simultaneously to the floor. The curtain closes. They draw on their rakes in identical rhythm, with great weight, slowly over the floor. After three such passes Camillo enters and they suspend their action so that he can pass in front of them. As their rakes swing up and drop down to the floor for the fourth pass, Camillo also drops to his knees, head down, his right palm slapping the floor as the rakes hit. The women draw a fifth pass over the

floor's surface as Camillo brings his head up and his right palm opens flat to the audience. The music ends.

Camillo      I was searching for my memory.

Alessandro enters abruptly, staring at Camillo. It is clear that the argument has touched a deep rift. Camillo turns away. Alessandro crosses to Camillo and aggressively kisses his cheek in a perfunctory display of reconciliation. Camillo shoves him away. Almost falling, Alessandro recovers his balance and exits in a fury. Zerbinetta and Beatrice follow rapidly to attempt to mend the rift. Camillo lifts the psaltrie and seeking quiescence draws the bow over the strings. Upstage of Camillo the figure of Arlequino sneaks into the center and assumes the disguise of a statue. HE conceals an enema syringe behind his back. Camillo turns and sees the frozen Arlequino. He exits playing the psaltrie (nine notes) disturbed by this vision from his memory made solid.

## **Scene 6      I Was Laughing Even as My Skin Was Crawling**

Lazzi #1

Object: The enema syringe

### THE LAZZO OF THE STATUE

Columbina and Isabella enter in conspiracy, sneaking up on Arlequino as statues themselves. When they flank him tightly they spring on him, tickling him and sinking their nails into his codpiece. He breaks, revealing the big enema syringe he has in store for Pantalone. They laugh and applaud. They hear Pantalone's heavy breathing as he approaches. They scramble for position, Columbina doing a back flip in the process. She lands as Pantalone rounds the corner. Columbina and Isabella introduce Pantalone to the statue.

Columbina    Ho visto, Ho visto, Ho visto (I saw, I saw, I saw)

Isabella      Stavo ridendo, Stavo ridendo, Stavo ridendo (I was laughing)

Columbina and Isabella start a tug of war with Pantalone in the middle over the question of where this statue should be placed on the grounds.

Columbina    Cercavo il centro (I was searching for the center)

Isabella      Sentivo una attrazione (I felt a pull)

Pantalone    (interspersed) Si! Escogito un modo (Yes! I will devise a way)



Arlequino sneaks up on the unsuspecting Pantalone and gives him a long and classic commedia enema. He manages to scuttle back to his frozen statue position before the outraged Pantalone can identify his assailant. Pantalone believes it to be Columbina and turns to take his revenge. She pleads with him.

Columbina Sono puro di peccato? Si! Non e stata la mia mano! (Am I pure from sin? Yes! It was not my hand!!)

She falls to her knees and in so doing goes to pound the earth for emphasis but instead her fist lands on his toe. He howls and jumps around preparing for an even greater vengeance. As he approaches Columbina again, she points to Isabella to get herself off the hook. He is agog. Summoning up the courage to scold her, he snorts and snarfs. She, unaware of the accusation, is laughing riotously in ascending and descending arpeggios. When she sees his ridiculous physical entreaty, "how could you?" she pouts.

Isabella Non e stata la mia mano! (It was not my hand)

Pantalone begins to suspect the statue.

Pantalone Mi ricordo.... (I remember....)

Col. & Isa. (sidetracking him) No, No, No, No, No, .... No, No, No, No ....

They draw him back D.C. where they spread eagle him again in a tug of war. Arlequino sneaks up behind him and by groping through Pantalone's legs steals his codpiece (where he keeps his money). Pantalone does a back flip and crumples in a heap in the U.L. corner. Columbina and Isabella give chase to Arlequino around the set, replete with flips and cabrioles. After the first revolution Isabella doubles back and cuts off Arlequino. Columbina races up behind them and as Arlequino turns to escape the mode of the scene changes. It is no longer a lazzo. The commedia music abruptly halts. Everyone is frozen in a violent tableaux for a split second. Columbina strikes Arlequino with the bludgeon in a mechanical motion. With a similar detached and repetitive motion Pantalone shakes his finger at Arlequino while convulsing with silent laughter. Freeze. Repeat. Arlequino sinks lower on his blow. The lights are getting lower. Freeze. Repeat. On the third blow Arlequino lands on the floor and Pantalone crosses down to address the audience. HE tears off his mask revealing Camillo.

Camillo I was laughing even as my skin was crawling.

The troupe exits, leaving Camillo momentarily stunned. Columbina utters a strange cry as she leaves, like a bird's cry on the wind.

Camillo exits.

## Scene 7      **The Ship Was Sailing**

Memory #4

Object: The figure

Beatrice enters with a guidepost on which rests the blue anatomical figure. Placing it D.L., she begins to trace its Cabalistic markings with her fingers. She is alarmed by a sign she reads on its chest. Having difficulty with her breath, she leans on the U.S. wall to steady herself. Camillo enters with a sextant and discovers her attempting to recover. She takes her position at the figure.

Camillo      Dimonstrazione of the Charting of Memory.

Camillo turns S.R. and raises his right foot into the "crossing the bridge" gesture. Beatrice mirrors his position in her manipulation of the figure's anatomy. Camillo turns and takes a sighting of his trace in the figure. Beatrice crosses with the post and figure to the symmetrical position S.R. Camillo raises his right palm to the side of his head. Beatrice mirrors the gesture in the figure. Camillo takes a sighting and exits. Beatrice mirrors the figure's gesture. She seems to take a pleasure in it. But her arm and palm begin to stiffen as if a violent memory were beginning to course through them, as if the arm were about to strike a blow without the consent of the mind. Her struggle is joined by a gasp from Zerbinetta who, entering U.L., has lost control of her own right arm as if by contagion. Beatrice manages to break and rushes to Zerbinetta, grabbing her arm and using all her strength to lower it. Zerbinetta's panic and strength cause them both to drive back into the guidepost, toppling the figure. With a cry Beatrice flees. Zerbinetta desperately attempts to restore the figure, but in her haste to exit it topples again. Camillo enters as Alessandro, having heard the accidents, runs in to restore the figure. Alessandro driven by the same urgency as Zerbinetta, sets the figure on the post only to topple it a third time. Camillo, in horror, cries out and flings his arms into a cabalistic symbol of protection against demons. Alessandro rights the figure and Camillo exits. Alessandro begins to exit with the figure but is blocked by Zerbinetta, who, entering U.L., reaches out to him. She tentatively and gently strokes his throat. He is paralyzed, wracked by conflicting pain and pleasure. Finally unable to withstand it any longer, he thrusts the figure into her face with a muffled cry and forcing her out of his path runs out. Zerbinetta attempting to compose herself, crosses to the guidepost, replaces the figure and exits. The lights go down. The figure is lit only by a pinspot. The curtains open revealing an empty inner room except for a chair. There are no shadows. Camillo crosses the frame of the window slowly in profile. At the S.L. edge he stops and turns just his face to the audience.

Camillo      The ship was sailing.

He exits. The curtains close. Alessandro approaches the figure. HE barely manages to contain an impulse to smash the figure. Instead, after a moment he cradles it to his shoulder and exits.

ABSENCE

The pinspot on the guidepost frames the absence of the figure. The curtains open on the empty inner room with the chair. This time Camillo does not cross. There is a large shadow cast by the chair. There is no change in this image for twenty-five seconds. Then the curtains close and the pinspot goes out on the guidepost.

BRDIGE 1

Into an otherwise pitch-black room, Beatrice enters with a lantern. She crosses D.C. to address the audience.

Beatrice I walked into the chamber. There I heard a man say softly, "a warning ...there will be a scream." I looked for the source of his voice and what loomed up in my vision was a large box like a Camera Obscura perfectly made of wood and without its front face. Inside a woman was sitting on nothing, her back against the shadows of the back wall. She was breathing deeply. In front of the box stranding almost motionless were Arlequino and Pantalone. The woman in the shadows began a hideous scream as if she were trying to rip out her bowels. The two commedians did a lazzo, my favorite lazzo. I laughed even as my skin was crawling. That same voice, - the man must have been cleverly hiding out of my view - said,

(at this point she pauses and crossing up places the lantern on the guidepost before she speaks again)

"the present moment."

## **Scene 8 I Remember a Room, a Pure Room**

Memory #5

Object: The lantern

The curtains open revealing Camillo kneeling in the "pure room."

Camillo Dimonstrazione of a Pure Room.

There is a chanting of voices from off stage as his head and body turn precisely to the four cardinal points.

Alessandro La nave salpava. (The ship is sailing.)

Beatrice Cercavo la mia memoria. (I was searching for my memory.)

Zerbinetta Mi ricordo una camera, una camera pura. (remember a room, a pure room.)

When Camillo returns to the same position:

Beat. & Zerb. Camera pura. (Repeated eight times)

Camillo I remember a room, a pure room.

Alessandro enters and hurls a ball of mud with great force against a panel on the off left wall. The Staining. The curtains close rapidly. Zerbinetta enters and taking Alessandro's mud-stained hand, smears it over her cheek. He can hardly breathe. He breaks from her grasp and flees with the bucket. Zerbinetta places the guidepost with the lantern on it center stage. Alessandro enters, placing the guidepost down left. Camillo, entering, places a guidepost up right. Zerbinetta crosses up right with lantern, and Alessandro crosses up left, as Camillo crossed down right. Unseen to the audience, Alessandro also sets the mallet on the stage left guidepost. Camillo attempts to introduce the dimonstrazione but stammers so badly he must motion to Zerbinetta to take over. HE crosses up and faces away.

Light goes to black during Zerbinetta's line.

Zerbinetta Dimonstrazione of Shadows. The lantern is placed so the shadows are cast, and the darkest part of the shadows, the umbra, will fall around the memory.

Pinspot comes up on the bludgeon. Camillo shouts out "NO." Zerbinetta and Alessandro both reach for the mallet simultaneously. They share a grip on it momentarily until Alessandro wrenches it free. They exit. Beatrice runs through the guideposts to the water pool. In one fluid motion, she arrives, drops to her knees by the pool and with her hands, sends a shower of water misting up above her. Then she sits very still, gazing, as if in reverie, into the pool. Camillo approaches her from behind as if to memorize her. He takes her head in his hands and lifting it gently back to him, kisses her on the lips. He exits with the lantern. She has a new position, but is still as before. Alessandro enters to remove the center guidepost. As he does, Beatrice shrieks as if her spine were being removed. Alessandro, his nerve shattered by the scream, exits running up left. Camillo runs in to her. He hurriedly tells her to run, the Umbra is approaching. She exits.

## Scene 9      The King of France Had Offered Me 1200 Ducats

Umbra #2

Object: The red velvet bag

Trying to control his panic, Camillo faces the audience.

Camillo      The King of France had offered me 1200 ducats.

The curtains open revealing the King.

Camillo      No, this is not my theatre. No, I deny it.

The King crosses down through the window and begins to pay the kneeling Camillo. One at a time, he places a coin in the outstretched hands of Camillo from the red velvet bag.

### ABNORMITATENKABINETT

The amnesiac enters the inner room. Twisting the staining cowl, she sings a fragment of the *Dies Irae*. The Schismatic, entering, reaches with longing for the amnesiac. She turns and laughs, turns and laughs. She drifts out. The Schismatic suffers from fits. He is torn. He tears the air. As the fit subsides, he laments.

Schismatic    O Dio in Cielo... O Dio in Cielo... O Dio in Cielo

He exits. The Beast enters to the water pool where he shatters its surface.

The Beast    The King of France had offered me 1200 ducats.

He exits, reaching for Camillo as he goes. As the Beast reaches, the King turns to exit, dropping the bag at Camillo's knees. On his way out, the King forces himself upon the Amnesiac who has been entering with the staining cowl. He throws her away and exits.

As the Amnesiac approaches Camillo, he, thinking that he recognizes Beatrice, places his hand on her face, as if he were searching for her feature. The Amnesiac unable to imagine or remember any faces, returns the gesture laughingly. For a moment, there may be a glimmer of recognition, but it passes. She wraps him in the staining cowl and begins straining to remove him. His thoughts are racing with the speed of memory.

Isabella, a misplaced fragment, floats laughing through the scene carrying a grammar panel with an image of a red velvet bag. Camillo remembers the bag, wrenches himself free from the grasp of the Amnesiac and returns for the bag. He tears off the cowl in anger, hurling it through the window. The curtains close and Camillo flees.

## **Scene 10    Every Object Stood Out in Sharp Relief, Their Boundaries Shining**

Lazzi #3

Object: Gold Ducat

Out of the darkness comes Arlequino, playing the coquette with two juggling balls inside his tunic as breasts. He places a third juggling ball on the stage right guidepost and gestures to it.

Arlequino    (in falsetto) Ogni oggetto era posto in rilievo i contorni lucicanti ...

He strikes the stage right guidepost and sashays rapidly to the stage left guidepost where he repeats his burlesque of a Dimonstrazione with the juggling ball.

Arlequino    (in falsetto) Every object stood out in sharp relief their boundaries shining.

He crosses to center and begins his gender transformation by removing the balls from his tunic.

Arlequino    (Basso) Ogni oggetto era posto in rilievo i contorni lucicanti.

He begins to juggle. He ends by passing all three balls up over the facade, the last one off his head. The Giantess enters, Isabella on twenty-four inch chopines, with large golden ducats over her breasts., along with the king's red velvet bag of ducats worn as a hat. Pantalone enters directly behind her.

THE LAZZO OF "THE MEMORY THEATRE"

Arlequino    Una Magus, Signor Giulio Camillo.

Pantalone as Camillo cartwheels in, nearly killing himself. He takes over the introductions. Columbina enters as the dwarf.

Pantalone    Grazzi, Signorina Beatrice. Signorina Zerbinetta. Signor, Signor...

He cannot remember who Arlequino is playing.

Isabella (Playing Zerbinetta, the Prompter) Alessandro!

Pantalone Alessandro!

Pantalone (Stuttering as Camillo) Di, Di, Di, Di, Di, Di...

Isabella Dimonstrazione.

Pantalone Grazzi, Dimonstrazione del ponte et della memoria.

#### LAZZO OF THE DIMONSTRAZIONE OF BRIDGE AND MEMORY

The troupe burlesques Camillo's Dimonstrazione in Scene One. Arlequino and Pantalone lose their concentration when they spot some beautiful lady in the first row and attempt to call their praises to her beauty. Columbina and Isabella get even by clipping them with rapidly tautened rope. The two men fly backwards. Isabella rewards Columbina with a toss of a ducat. Seeing gold fly, Arlequino and Pantalone scramble to wrangle it from Columbina, but she pulls a dagger on them. Pantalone leaps on Arlequino's back in fright. Columbina points to Isabella as the moneybags.

#### LAZZO OF THE LADDER

Arlequino and Pantalone, money hungry, begin to leeringly approach Isabella, but her height keeps the money bag out of their reach. Arlequino has a brainstorm.

Arlequino Une ponte.

He rushes off.

Pantalone Une ponte?

Arlequino rushes back in with a ladder and introduces it.

Arlequino Une ponte!

Pantalone Une ponte!!

Pantalone climbs the ladder that Arlequino holds for him. Columbina grabs hold of the tip of his cape as he tries to grasp the bag held just out of his reach. She pulls him backwards until he is just at the verge of toppling. Isabella teasingly keeps the bag following his receding grasp as he goes. His frantic cries and remonstrations reverse

the direction. HE chases the gold again and again, just as he is in reach, he is pulled almost over backwards. He screams and yaps. Regaining his balance he faces out.

Pantalone     Ongi aggetto era posto in rilievo, i contorni lucicanti.

He scans the audience to see if they have understood him. Realizing they have not, he holds up his fingers. Isabella holds up the gold ducat.

Pantalone     Ah scuzzi... every object stood out in sharp relief, their boundaries shining.

He makes a last stab at the money and is toppled backwards into a roll. The troupe goes into a frenetic farewell, bowing, charming, and generally pointing out to the audience the shining contorni of various parts of their anatomies. The Giantess glides out. Columbina leaps on Pantalone's back to exit. Arlequino does a triplet of ladder gags until Beatrice enters. (He first smashes his fingers on the ladder, then balances the ladder, and finally trips and gets his head stuck in the rungs.) He then exits.

## **Scene 11     I Was Standing in the Center of the Bridge**

Memory #6

Object: The Crystal Ball

Beatrice enters with the sun and places it on the centerpost. Then she sets two guideposts equidistant from the center right and left. Then, as she crosses the center, she is taken by the same vortex that overwhelmed her in Scene 3. This time she harnesses it focusing all its energy between a triangle she forms with her hands in front of her brow. The curtains open. Camillo enters upstage of her taking an identical position with the crystal ball (the center) between his hands. Beatrice crosses to S.L. guidepost.

Camillo     I was standing in the center of the bridge.

### **BALANCE AT THE CENTER**

Alessandro enters with a balance bar (painted in gradations notating the center). He places it between the guideposts. Zerbinetta enters and Beatrice helps her mount the balance bar. She crosses it stopping in the center to raise her right leg in the "crossing the bridge" gesture. As she passes the center, Camillo struggles to thrust the crystal away from his brow. Beatrice seems to transmit energy, through extreme effort of will, to him through her hands drawing him to complete the action. Zerbinetta dismounts with Alessandro's aid and prolongs their contact. Beatrice strikes the



balance bar. Alessandro and Zerbinetta cross to the ladders S.R. and S.L. respectively. Camillo places the crystal ball on the floor center and follows to mount the S.L. ladder. Beatrice reenters to the foot of the S.R. ladder.

#### THE LADDER DANCE

The two pairs oscillate up and down across imaginary center points on the ladder. Beatrice and Zerbinetta punctuate their cycles with expansive and graceful sweeps. They all dismount. Camillo enters the inner room, the crystal ball at his brow.

#### THREE LADDERS

Beatrice, Zerbinetta, and Alessandro enter to a row on the vertical central file each with a ladder (white, grey, black) balanced across their palms. They begin simultaneously to rock them, in counterpoint to Beatrice and Alessandro. After twelve repetitions, they stop and sweep off S.R.

#### FIXATION

Camillo is revealed rocking in a cart center in the inner room, the crystal at his chest. After seven or eight, he becomes static, his head collapsed on the cart. The curtains close.

#### **Scene 12 Venice Was at War with the Emperor**

Lazzi #4

Object: Puppets

Zerbinetta sweeps in and exits with the Sun. Beatrice enters with a grammar panel on which is written "Venice was at War with the Emperor." Hanging on the sign are two puppets, Pantalone and Isabella. She exits,. Pantalone enters, discovering the puppets, he praises and pats the Pantalone puppets and smothers the Isabella puppet with kisses. The curtains open. In a swoon, looking back over his head, he spots the flying machine in the inner room. He starts to put it on and gets tangled in it. Arlequino enters and finds Pantalone about to try to fly.

Arlequino No No Pantalone, il fiuto della morte. (No No Pantalone, the scent of death.)

Pantalone Il fiuto della morte.

He realizes what it means, "the scent of death."

Pantalone Il fiuto della morte

#### LAZZO OF FLYING

Arlequino attempts to teach Pantalone how to fly and starts up the ladder with him to demonstrate..

Arlequino La nave salpava.

#### LAZZO OF THE LADDER

They climb all over each other as Arlequino exhorts Pantalone to fly. Pantalone falls to the floor once. Pantalone becomes enraged at the abuse when finally Arlequino sits on his head and he carries Arlequino in his shoulders to the center for "war."

#### LAZZO OF KILLING

The puppets sitting in the puppet theatre watch.

1. Pantalone strangles Arlequino.
2. Arlequino says: no, no, no, try this (farting)
3. Pantalone says: no, no, no try this (bludgeoning him with a planet as the sound of a wood block being struck is heard)

#### LAZZO OF THE PUPPET MURDER

The puppets applaud wildly and then do a performance imitating what they saw Arlequino and Pantalone do. Arlequino and Pantalone are rapt, cheering their favorite. Arlequino puppet expires. Pantalone strikes the planet and the flying machine and Arlequino strikes the D.S. puppets and panel, cabrioling in silhouette as the Columbina puppet beckons them seductively. Just as Pantalone is about to exit, the King floats into the window. Pantalone is paralyzed and begins a metamorphosis into Camillo.

The curtains close. Blackout.

### **Scene 13 The King Believes it is a Just War**

Umbra #3

Object: The Cup of Amnesia

Out of darkness the Amnesiac wanders to the water pool with a goblet in her hand. She runs her fingers through the water as she kneels by the pool. Camillo, the staining cowl wrapped around his body, enters to the water pool. The Amnesiac fills the cup from the water of the pool and offers it to Camillo. He lifts the cup in a toast.

Camillo      The King believes it is a just war.

He drinks from the cups and spews out blood onto the staining cowl clutched by the Amnesiac. He forgets everything. The Amnesiac draws him by the staining cowl into the inner room, the curtains of which open as they approach. The entrance of the King in the inner room splits them. The King crosses down with a large scale of justice in his hand. The Schismatic enters and forces Camillo to watch the King who whirls the scales viciously over and over around his body, finally halting.

King    I feel very strongly about not reawakening the memories of the past.

He hurls the scales against the wall where they smash. The King turns and exits through the inner room.

Camillo attempting to flee through the inner door is blocked by the King's disembodied hand holding the bludgeon. Camillo is repelled. The hand with the bludgeon disappears. The Amnesiac possessively follows it. The Schismatic accuses Camillo with a silent hand. Camillo staggers out of the inner room away from his accuser. The King leaps upon the Schismatic's back, forcing him to the floor by choking him. Camillo turns his head away and in a moment of stillness:

Camillo      I am silent.

Camillo exits. The curtains close slowly as the King continues to strangle the Schismatic.

#### **Scene 14      I was Trying to Trace the Scent of Death**

Memory #7

Object: Hourglass

Camillo enter D.C. with the hourglass.

Camillo      I was trying to trace the scent of death.

He turns the hourglass over and places it on the center post. Alessandro enters and sets up two guideposts with grammar panels on them of hieroglyphs. Crossing to the center, he announces the Dimonstrazione. Camillo in position U.L.

Alessandro    Dimonstrazione of Memory as a Glyph.

Alessandro physically performs the glyph on his panel. When Camillo attempts to perform, his own mind blanks and, nearly collapsing, he is caught by Alessandro. Sensing crisis, Beatrice and Zerbinetta rush in and Beatrice, in an attempt to reverse Camillo's loss, reverses the hourglass, to no avail. Beatrice crosses to the S.R. ladder and mounts it. It is obvious she suffers from acrophobia. Alessandro forces Camillo to stand and cross center.

Alessandro Dimonstrazione of the Fear of Memory.

Alessandro flees. Beatrice, her body arching through the rungs of the ladder, balances precariously on her pelvis, as if falling. Zerbinetta goes into a deep arabesque also evoking a suspended free fall. A single note rises in pitch. It crescendos and Beatrice clutches the ladder. Zerbinetta snaps back to her feet, grabs the hourglass, and prompts Camillo's exit as she exits. Beatrice begins a terrified descent from the ladder.

Alessandro enters surreptitiously, unaware of Beatrice's presence. He opens the curtains and stealthily removes the texts from the Memory Cabinet. He draws the curtains shut and discovers Beatrice has observed him. She rushes at him, lunging for the texts. He blocks her thrust and raises a threatening fist. She turns away and he exits. She is torn, unable to comprehend what is happening or what to do. She senses an impending disaster. She exits. Blackout. The curtains open. Camillo is kneeling motionless in the center of the inner room facing S.R.

As a floating globe, the white light of death, appearing to hover, passes through the door and moves very slowly (about 25 seconds) toward Camillo, lodging at his shoulder, just U.S. of his head. It is an ominous halo. His head snaps back. After five seconds, blackout. The curtain closes.

BRIDE 2

Camillo enters followed by Zerbinetta. He kneels center. As the Prompter, she forces him to remember all the sentences that have past and then the sentence of the present moment. She places her hand at the base of his skull as if driving spikes into his brain. He repeats, with great resistance, after her. It rises emotionally in pitch.

Zerb. & Cam. I was crossing a bridge.

I saw a commedia troupe on the opposite shore.

I felt a pull between us like gravity.

I saw one of them, Columbina, strike Arlequino with a mallet for his thievery.

I was searching for my memory.

I was laughing even as my skin was crawling.

The ship was sailing.

I remember a room, a pure room.

The King of France had offered me 1200 ducats.  
Every object stood out in sharp relief, their boundaries shining.  
I was standing at the center of a bridge.  
Venice was at war with the Emperor.  
The King believes it is a just war.  
I was trying to trace the scent of death.  
Am I pure from sin?

**Scene 15      Am I Pure From Sin? Yes. It Was Not My Hand**

Umbra #4

Object: The Bludgeon

The Amnesiac enters with a bludgeon upraised in hand. She is fixated on the sound of Camillo's "pure." Attempting to remember the word she repeats it, distorting it with her aphasia. She smashes the mallet down on the center post and exits.

Camillo      Am I pure from sin? Yes. It was not my hand.

The curtains open revealing the King who holds marionette strings in his hands. The strings hold hands which hold strings. Camillo's shoulders jerk upwards as if he is held by those strings and he begins an unnatural twisting dance towards the bludgeon. As his hand begins to hover above the bludgeon, he begins to resist. The Beast enters and in complicity with the King, he directs a compelling force through his claw, across the space, forcing Camillo's hand to contact the bludgeon. Camillo shrieks in terror, wrenches his hand from the bludgeon, and flees U.L. The Beast lifts the bludgeon and raising it above him, slowly follows Camillo. Alessandro enters with the bucket of mud and hurls a mud ball at the panel off left. The staining. Zerbinetta enters and slowly arches backwards onto the floor before him. Kneeling, he tries desperately to touch her face. Ultimately, he smears his own face with his muddy palm and once again flees from her. Zerbinetta rises and removes the guideposts and exits.

**Scene 16      I Will Focus My Entire Memory in a Single Moment**

Memory #8

Object: Seven Stars in the Hand

Camillo      (haltingly) I will focus my entire memory in a single moment.

He kneels as the curtains open. The lights go down on Camillo as he raises his right palm which is filled with seven stars. In the inner room are Alessandro, Zerbinetta, and Beatrice. Alessandro controls a small derrick.

Alessandro Dimonstrazione of the excavation of memory.

As Alessandro moves the derrick up and down, Zerbinetta and Beatrice rise and fall slowly, excavating the objects that contain Camillo's memory:

Zerbinetta 1. Bridge

Beatrice 2. Mercury's Foot

Zerbinetta 3. Right Angle Plumblin

Beatrice 4. Pyramid

Zerbinetta 5. Psaltrie

Beatrice 6.. Enema Syringe

Zerbinetta 7. Figure

Beatrice 8. Lantern

Zerbinetta 9. Red Velvet Bag

Beatrice 10. Commedia ducat

Zerbinetta 11. Crystal Ball

Beatrice 12. Puppet

Zerbinetta 13. Cup of Amnesia

Beatrice 14. Hourglass

Zerbinetta 15. Bludgeon

As Zerbinetta displays the bludgeon, we see her impulse to strike Alessandro. She checks it. Beatrice notices and the curtain rapidly closes.

### **Scene 17 A Line of Monks Was Chanting the *Dies Irae***

Umbra #5

Object: The Claw

The sound of the monks chanting the *Dies Irae* is heard. Camillo buries the seven stars in his tunic. A line of monks appears. Camillo takes a place within their line and slowly exits with them as more monks enter. The effect is one of an infinite cycle of monks. Finally the last monk stops at the S.R. corner. The chant slowly dies. A claw appears slowly from beneath the robes of the last monk. The monk removes his cowl, revealing that it is Camillo. In disgust and confusion he forces the claw back within the folds of his robes. Turning to the audience:

Camillo        A line of monks was chanting the *Dies Irae*.

### **Scene 18        Oh God in Heaven, I've Struck Him**

Umbra #6

Object: The Burning Ladder

Three monks enter and stand with their backs to the audience. Camillo takes the same position he held when he said "I am silent." There is a disjointed laugh from one of the monks. The monks uncowl. It is the Amnesiac, the Schismatic, and the King. The King and the Schismatic take positions on the central vertical file. The King holds a heavy wooden block just upstage from the Schismatic's head facing S.L. The Amnesiac raises the bludgeon slowly. She rends the air with a horrible shriek and brings the bludgeon smashing down upon the block. Alessandro's head snaps back as if it had taken the blow and he slumps to the floor. The King exits swiftly. The Amnesiac kneels over the Schismatic's head, pondering it.

Camillo        Oh God in Heaven, I've struck him.

The Amnesiac drags the Schismatic off as the curtains open revealing a horizontal ladder burning fiercely in the inner room. Burning the bridge of memory. Camillo staggers off. Like an apparition, the King drifts in, framed in the doorway, gazing at the flames. He withdraws. Alessandro enters the inner room, carrying his abacus. He makes the sign of the cross and kneels before the burning ladder as if before votive lights. As if in mourning, a final leave taking, he murmurs:

Alessandro (murmuring) O Dio in Cielo  
O Dio in Cielo  
O Dio in Cielo

He reaches for the burning ladder, drawn to the flame. He hypnotically reaches for it, grasping the rail, searing his flesh. Reacting to the pain, he rises and exits. Columbina enters U.R., with a psaltrie, plucking a discordant melody, silhouetted by the ladder as it becomes embers, D.C. She brushes her fingers over the strings. The curtains close. As Columbina exits, she plucks a melody on the psaltrie that is slow

and melancholy but consonant. Offstage she draws her fingers across the strings and the curtains open revealing Camillo.

## Scene 19      No I Deny It

Lazzi #6

Object: The Commedia Tongue Extractor

Camillo stands in Pantalone's costume, unmasked.

Camillo      No I deny it.

The curtains close abruptly, immediately reopening, revealing the whole commedia troupe in place, Camillo now masked as Pantalone.

Pantalone      No l'ho smentisco (No I deny it)

### LAZZO OF THE TONGUE

Like a choir of angels, Isabella, Columbina, and Arlequino implore Pantalone to speak. He, resolute, begins his denial again, but no words come out of his mouth. The others draw back in amazement. He tries again. Nothing. He turns to each of them for help, opening his mouth wide and pointing to his tongue. Columbina, peering in, is dumbfounded. Isabella is at a loss. Arlequino has an idea. He disappears for an instant, returning with a gigantic pair of pliers. Pantalone panics but Columbina, with a sharp blow between the shoulder blades, puts his tongue in position for its surgery. Arlequino clamps the pliers down on the tongue and draws slowly back. Isabella creates an expanding line between the tongue and the pliers as it stretches, one foot, two feet, it snaps. Pantalone jolts backwards, leaving Arlequino with a strange and wonderful (invisible) object in the jaws of his pliers. Everyone is fascinated by the tongue, but Arlequino coyly keeps it from their touch. Once, twice, on the third approach, Isabella, lunging swiftly, knocks the pliers open, sending the tongue flying high in the sky. They watch it fly and then fall to earth, it bounces, they watch it fly up again and it falls, bounces and flies so high it disappears. They cross down, eyes to the sky, searching for the tongue, Isabella D.L., Columbina D.R., Arlequino U.C., spots the tongue and gesturing to the audience for secrecy, he jockeys for position underneath it, snags it in his hat and attempts to sneak off, but just as he's about to round the corner, the tongue speaks:

Arlequino      (speaking like a ventriloquist into his hat) No l'ho smentisco. (No I deny it)



Isabella and Columbina give chase. Pantalone lurches out of the inner room to C.S. He is flailing wildly, spinning rapidly, and gesturing to the audience the tragedy of his tongue. The mute dance becomes grotesque. Pantalone rips off his mask, revealing Camillo who wants to speak now but cannot. He gestures to his mouth in anguish, trying to speak. His muteness turns to a dark resignation. He has reached the point where he would welcome the confrontation with the Beast. He disrobes and lies back in the water pool, waiting. The light is silver. The image anticipates Marat in his bath. There is complete stillness for at least 30 seconds. Beatrice enters and pulls Camillo gently from the water pool. She wraps him with a staining cowl and exits. He stands stunned for several moments.

## **Scene 20     I am Silent**

Memory # 9

Object: The Baton

Zerbinetta enters as the curtains open revealing the bludgeon attached to a thin red line. She stands at the S.R. edge of the window and waits. Camillo crosses up to the S.L. edge of the window and faces Zerbinetta. He is weak. His body drips with water and the cowl that covers him is stained with blood.

Zerbinetta     Dimonstrazione of Memory Adrift

Using the prompter's baton, she directs Camillo's hand to the bludgeon. As he grasps it, by her arching motion she directs the bludgeon's rise through the arc of the baton. When the bludgeon is at the top of its rise, in the exact center of the window, she rocks forward, slamming the baton against the floor. Camillo's hand drops but the bludgeon remains spinning in mid air. Beatrice enters. There is the sound of huge cogs turning in the celestial sphere. Camillo is a vacant shell as he exits U.L. as Zerbinetta and Beatrice mount the ladders. Suspending themselves by their knees, they hang straight down from the horizontal segment of the ladder bridge. Their dresses fall over their heads, giving them the strange shape of black bells. They drift back and forth and remain there swaying as the bludgeon relentlessly spins in the window. The image remains long enough to become hypnotic (approximately 1 1/2 minutes). They rise up slowly, simultaneously, and dismount. Beatrice leans at the base of the S.L. ladder, as if for support. Zerbinetta waits for her, center, there is no response. She exits. Beatrice exits.

## **Scene 21     I Will Devise a Way to Leave This Earth**

Umbra #7

Object: The Flying Machine

Camillo enters, strapped within the flying machine. He slowly flexes and contracts the wings.

Camillo        I will devise a way to leave this earth.

He inclines his body forward, focusing his last remaining strength and attempts to conform his body to the laws of flight within this frail wood and canvas machine. The Amnesiac enters. She is obsessed with the word "leave." She pins his shoulders and tears the wings from his arms. He is still as she casts the wings aside. She takes him by the throat and attempts to draw him back through the closed and darkened curtains. He tears himself away from her grasp and she continues off. He has fallen to his knees as the curtains open to reveal the Beast. The Beast grasps Camillo's neck with his claw and hurls him like a rag across the stage. The Beast leaps ferociously to the center of the stage. Using the awesome force within his claw, he draws Camillo across the distance between them, propelling him into his arms. He then hurls him again a great distance. Drawing Camillo back again, the Beast bends him over backwards across his knee, almost breaking his spine and finally letting him crumple to the floor. He raises his foot above Camillo's head about to crush it, and then abruptly pivots and stalks off through the window, the curtains closing behind him. Camillo is left nearly shattered on the floor. After a time, he begins to pull himself to his feet.

Camillo        The Beast... The Beast... has nearly overwhelmed me... I must end the performance... (drawing himself to his full height)

Camillo        I thank you for the grace of your presence.

He turns slowly upstage and faces the curtains where the Beast has just exited. We don't know whether he will confront the Beast or offer himself to him. He moves slowly to the curtains, parts them, and steps through them.

**The End**