Joan Schirle is the Founding Artistic Director of Dell’Arte International and the Director of the Dell’Arte International School of Physical Theatre located in Blue Lake, CA. She is an actor, playwright, director, deviser, and teacher, whose acting work was recognized with a 2006 Fox Foundation/TCG Resident Actor Fellowship. A senior teacher of the Alexander Technique, in 2004 she was honored at the 16th Cairo International Experimental Theatre Festival as a leader in the field of experimental theatre. She has directed at San Diego Rep, Houston’s Alley Theatre, Bloomsburg Ensemble, A Traveling Jewish Theatre, and Dell’Arte. Schirle has taught at Yale, UCSD, University of Missouri-Kansas City, and others as well as for Cirque du Soleil.
Carlo Goldoni is considered the reformer (or executioner) of commedia dell’arte, depending on your bias. But his plays truly belong to the modern comedy of character, including Chekhov’s plays, for example. Observing Venetian life and people around him, he invented characters that referenced but were far more complex than the masks of traditional Italian improvised comedy. Goldoni wrote over 150 plays, yet only a handful are known in the U.S. (the most popular being The Servant of Two Masters). Fifty years ago Carlo Mazzzone-Clementi and Jane Hill, the founders of my company and school, Dell’Arte International, translated La Cameriera Brillante (1754) for a university production in California. It has not been produced in the U.S. since then. Thanks to CU Boulder and The Roe Green Foundation its re-emergence 50 years later at a university celebrating 50 years of theatre seems perfect for this Goldoni gem.

---Joan Schirle, Director

A look at 18th Century Italy’s social class hierarchy can help us appreciate the conflicts in Goldoni’s “The Ingenious Chambermaid.” Nobles were considered decorous, proper, extravagant and expert at avoiding difficult situations. But nobility became increasingly impoverished during this period, as the middle class—merchants, wealthy land owners, civil servants—gained in numbers and economic power. Marriage between nobility and middle class was not uncommon, especially when an impoverished son of a noble sought a wealthy middle class bride whose family was eager for a title. The merchant class was known for devotion to work, simple tastes and exemplary family life, though considered by the nobility to be self-centered and even dull in their tastes. The peasants, as usual, were among the poor inhabitants of the country. Simple and generally uneducated, many former land-based peasants had to find work in the cities as porters and servants. With humor and compromise, Argentina mediates class conflict far better than today’s diplomats!

---Jennifer Lashley, Dramaturg