

Aesop's Commedia

A Play for Young Audiences

By Craig Lee

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Dedication

To my Mom and Dad for their love and support. And for all the lessons they taught along the way.

Synopsis

Pantalone and his company are traveling the countryside sharing their plays with anyone who will listen. It has been a long journey and the patience of the company is starting to wear thin. They finally take a rest and Pantalone decides to share some of his favorite stories from Aesop. Unfortunately, he is constantly interrupted by the squabbles and needs of the other company members. If he could only get everyone to work together, Pantalone could finish telling his story!

Join us as our troupe of players present some of your favorite stories from Aesop in their unique and zany commedia style. The company, including Arlecchino, Isabella, Columbina, Capitano, and Pedrolino, will leave you laughing, while teaching a few lessons along the way.

Stories include "The Crow and the Pitcher," "The Fox and the Grapes," and "The Boy Who Cried Wolf."

Specifically written for children K-5, but suitable for all ages, this show runs about an hour.

La Compagnia del Cardinale Commedia

(The Cardinal Commedia Company)

*Approx. 4 m, 2 w, plus extras**

PANTALONE: The old man and leader of the company. He tries his best to keep things working well and everyone happy.

ARLECCHINO: The wily servant of Pantalone. He can be cunning and witty. He can also be lazy and forgetful. He is more interested in playing games and having fun than doing what he should.

ISABELLA: Pantalone's spoiled daughter. The object of Capitano's affection.

CAPITANO: He considers himself the bravest, noblest soldier in all the land. However, he is the most afraid. Deeply in love with Isabella, but not good at showing it.

PEDROLINO: Capitano's poor, put-upon right-hand man who is smarter than he seems.

COLUMBINA: The smartest of them all. She is a servant to Pantalone. As witty as Arlecchino, but more organized. When trouble arises, she's the one with the plan.

ZANNI TORILINI and ZANNI FUSILLI: The worker bees of the company. They fill in anywhere needed. They are also responsible for the live sound effects in the production. You can use as many zanni as you need.

***NOTE:** *The characters are based on the traditional commedia characters. However, all characters can be played by either male or female actors. Just change Arlecchino to Arlecchina, and so on.*

A NOTE FROM THE PLAYWRIGHT

Pronunciation of the name Aesop: I used the long A sound - /ey+/sop/. Rhymes with hay. This will help with the verbal misunderstandings between Pantalone and Pedrolino.

Lazzi: I have described many of the lazzi that are included in the action. Please think of these as suggestions. Feel free to create your own lazzi, add to what is there or do them as described. Their whole point is to have fun and make them your own.

SET

The playing area is created with a gypsy wagon in which the side of the wagon folds down to become a stage. There is a curtain at the opening. There is also a bench onstage.

PROPS

Tricycle
Horn
Book
Picture frame with a painting of water
Pitcher
Necklace
Cookies / cookie jar.
"Grapes" (acorns) hanging from a string on a pole
Blanket
A "weapon"
Rose
Bear costume
Bowl and spoon

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(AT RISE: PANTALONE enters from the behind the audience riding his tricycle, honking his horn, making a ruckus. He makes his way to the front of the playing area.)

PANTALONE: Greetings, greetings and salad nations. What a wonderful gathering I have stumbled upon. Please, allow me to introduce me. I am Pantalone. A poor player who travels from town to town, looking for any opportunity to share my talent. And look what I have found -- the perfect place. *(Looks at the empty stage.)* Why, this empty space could be anything we like. It could be an underwater kingdom or jungle full of wild animals. One could transform himself into a lion, or a tiger, or a bear! Oh my, so many choices. On this empty stage I shall invite my friends to come and play. All the magic and wonder come to life, right before your eyes. Do you like the sound of that? *(Audience responds.)* Should I call them? *(Audience responds.)* I should? *(Audience responds.)* Then, let me present to you, La Commedia!

(The rest of the COMPANY enters from different directions, interacting with the audience. A few members enter the stage pulling a gypsy wagon. As they come together on stage, they see each other, and their mood immediately changes. You can sense their frustration and exhaustion. Finally, they come to rest, scattered about the stage and on a bench.)

PANTALONE: Greetings, fellow players.

ALL: *(Mumble and grumble.)*

PANTALONE: Why the mumbles and grumbles? Can't you see the opportunity in front of you? We get to perform a play!

COLUMBINA: Play, schmlay. I'm ready to go home.

ISABELLA: Me, too. These conditions are horrible for my complexion.

COLUMBINA: *(Mocking.)* ...are horrible for my complexion.

ISABELLA: Are you mocking me?

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COLUMBINA: (*Mocking.*) ...are you mocking me?

PANTALONE: Ladies, please.

CAPITANO: It wouldn't be so bad, but it's been weeks since I've had a good night's sleep. This morning, I woke up on the floor.

ARLECCHINO: Well, if you could stop snoring, I wouldn't have to roll you over.

CAPITANO: I don't snore.

ARLECCHINO: Oh, yes you do.

CAPITANO: Do not.

ARLECCHINO: Do too. Last night I awoke to such a roar, I thought I was being attacked by a bear. Only to find it was you.

CAPITANO: I'm telling you; I do not snore! (*To PEDROLINO.*) Tell them.

PEDROLINO: I'd rather not.

COLUMBINA: He snores so loud that elephants cover their ears.

ARLECCHINO: He snores so loud that thunder sounds like a sneeze.

PEDROLINO: He snores so loud that... (*CAPITANO stands next to him.*) (*Caught.*) ...that, that... he doesn't snore.

CAPITANO: (*To ARLECCHINO.*) Why, I should give you a good thrashing!

PANTALONE: (*Jumping between THEM.*) Gentlemen, not in front of the "you know who."

(*PANTALONE gestures to the audience. THEY acknowledge the audience and sit back down. As CAPITANO sits he accidentally knocks ISABELLA to the floor. He does not apologize.*)

PANTALONE: (*Cont'd.*) Why are you all fighting like cats and frogs? I mean bats and dogs.

ALL: (*Mumble and grumble.*)

PANTALONE: I know what would make everyone feel better.

ALL: Huh? (*Excited.*)

PANTALONE: A play!

ALL: Oh. (*Deflated.*)

End of Freeview

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