

*Never was a story of more foolish woe,
Than this of Silvia and her Lelio —*

The Romancers

Adaptation by Jenny Newell Cook and Lorraine Thompson

*This hilarious comedy is loosely based
on Edmond Rostand's "The Romancers"*

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STORY OF THE PLAY

This hilarious comedy is loosely based on the "The Romancers" by Edmond Rostand. It draws from Rostand's main plotline and infuses it with characters, scenarios, and a commedia dell'arte performance style. Dreamy young lovers Lelio and Silvia must keep their love a secret from their fathers, who are fierce rivals. Will a scheme featuring the cunning Arlecchino and a quartet of bumbling bandits save the day?

Middle and high school actors will revel in this fast-paced, uproarious script complete with screwball antics and a cast of madcap characters including two saucy servants, a lovable miser, and a host of zanies. It is this type of slapstick humor that makes the performance style of commedia dell'arte a perfect match for young actors.

ORIGINAL CAST AND CREW

This play was originally produced by the Athens Academy Middle School in Athens, GA in 2004. The production was directed by Jenny Newell Cook.

ARLECCHINO: Montana Perry
LELIO: Jarrard Cole
SILVIA: Sarah Schacher
SMERALDINA: Ramey Mize
ORAZIO: Collins Broun
PANTALONE: Ellis Tomporowski
DOTTORE: Chris Aleshire
ROTALINDA: Laura Keith
FLORINETTA: Audrey Glasgow
BANDITS: Christine Sherwood, Alex Brown, Alex Lober, Hugh Schelsinger
ZANIES: Zana Brawner, Zoe Brawner, Rona Chen, Della Cummings, Libby Hansen, Katie Milner, Lauren Slocombe, Steven Stein, Kristen Turner, Mary Hadley Williams, Charlie Yarn

AUTHORS' NOTE

Commedia dell'arte (comedy of artists) originated in the streets and marketplaces of the early Italian Renaissance. These Italian street performers used acrobatic skills and physical comedy to help establish commedia as a genre of theatre by the mid-1500s. Commedia is a broad style of performing, which includes the audience as part of the performance. Historically, the performances included as much improvisation as scripted material. The original version of this play was first produced in 1894 at the Comedie Francaise.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(5 m, 4 w, 4 flexible, extras)

ARLECCHINO (Are-la-keen-o): Loveable, cunning, clever; taking money from others is his main occupation.

PANTALONE (Pan-ta-lone-a): A greedy miser; he loves his daughter Silvia almost as much as he loves his money.

DOTTORE (Doc-tor-a): A scholarly romantic; father of Lelio.

LELIO (Lee-lee-o): The melodramatic lover of Silvia.

SILVIA: The dreamy, idealistic young lover of Lelio.

SMERALDINA: A saucy maid in the house of Pantalone; she is in love with Orazio.

ORAZIO: A servant in the house of Dottore; he is in love with Smeraldina.

ROTALINDA: The strict and overly stern mother of Lelio and wife to Dottore.

FLORINETTA: The frantic mother of Silvia and wife to Pantalone.

BANDITS 1, 2, 3, 4: High-spirited and stupid.

ZANIES: Clown-like characters.

Note: Zanies are integral to establishing mood. They provide entertaining scene transitions filled with juggling, acrobatics, gags, and mischief. Through individual character development, relationships and scenarios can be created. It is these scenarios that provide entertaining scene transitions.

SETTING

The set for this play can be as simple or elaborate as desired. The original production consisted of six freestanding frames (4' x 8') with rotating interior panels. (Three panels flipped on a horizontal axis and three spun on a vertical axis.) A garden scene can be painted on one side and an Italian street scene on the other side. Two garden benches and a weight-bearing wall (5' x 9' x 2.5' on a small wagon) also was used to create the garden scenes. The "wall" must be climbed over easily and allow for access from the rear as well as the sides.

PROPS

Flute
Baskets of bread
Crates of spices
Carts of fruit
Money
Money bags
Small stack of packages
Book of Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet"
(2) stacks of books
Weight-bearing box painted to look like a stack of books.
Scarf
(4) wine goblets
(2) combat swords
Oversized sword
Small dagger
(4) black domino masks

SOUND EFFECTS

Romantic music such as "Romeo and Juliet Overture" by
Tchaikovsky.
Music to indicate rapid pace such as "William Tell Overture"

Scene 1

(AT RISE: ARLECCHINO ENTERS from house playing flute and crosses to stand downstage center.)

ARLECCHINO: *(Speaks in Italian.)* Bonjourno! Le signore ed i gentiluomini, si mi chiamo Arlecchino, e lei? Capish? AHHH! Inglese! Hello! Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Arlecchino, and you? You are here to see a play! In fair Verona we lay our scene, a marketplace.

(Claps twice and moves to stand SL. As MUSIC plays, the ZANIES ENTER bringing the marketplace to life. Street VENDORS with their baskets of bread, crates of spices, and carts of fruit fill the stage. BANDITS cross the stage singing "99 Bottles of Wine on the Wall." Once Zany relationships and setting are established, the marketplace dissolves. FLORINETTA, SILVIA, PANTALONE, and SMERALDINA ENTER SL. Pantlone is busy counting his money as Florinetta addresses Silvia. Smeraldina follows behind carrying a small stack of packages.)

FLORINETTA: Floating, Silvia. A true lady never appears to be walking. Floating.

SILVIA: But, Mama!

(THEY freeze as ROTALINDA, LELIO, DOTTORE and ORAZIO ENTER SR. Dottore carries a book in front of him, busily reading as Rotalinda addresses Lelio. Orazio follows behind carrying a stack of books.)

ROTALINDA: *(Grabs book of poetry away from LELIO.)* Latin, my son, not poetry, paves tomorrow's roads with future success.

LELIO: But, Mama!

(ROTALINDA, LELIO, DOTTORE and ORAZIO freeze.)

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ARLECCHINO: Two households ... *(Gestures toward families.)* ... both alike in dignity. Ahh! A meeting!

(ARLECCHINO claps and ROTALINDA and FLORINETTA turn and see each other.)

FLORINETTA: You!

ROOTALINDA: You!

(Each WIFE crosses DS of her HUSBAND and pushes him to center stage.)

FLORINETTA: Pantalone!

ROOTALINDA: Graziano! *[Gra-zee-ah-no.]*

DOTT/PANT: *(HUSBANDS look up from what they are doing and see each other.)* What? Ho? Hmmm ...

PANTALONE: *(Pretends to spit on the ground in front of HIM.)*
Hock-tooeey!

DOTTORE: *(Pretends to spit on ground in front of HIM.)*
Hock-tooeey!

PANT/DOTT: Hock —

(BOTH begin to spit again; ARLECHINO freezes the action.)

ARLECCHINO: They are divided by an argument, an ancient argument, an ancient ... *(Pauses and steps over the pretend spit.)* ... ancient argument. Did I mention it was an argument that was ancient? *(HE claps and the action resumes.)*

PANT/DOTT: *(BOTH continue spitting.)* ... — tooeey

(PANTALONE and DOTTORE turn and EXIT the way they entered. WIVES cross to center.)

FLORINETTA: You!

ROOTALINDA: You!

End of Freeview

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