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## **Family Plays**

# THE LOVE FOR THREE ORANGES

BY  
DOREEN B. HEARD

FREELY ADAPTED FROM THE SCENARIO BY  
COUNT CARLO GOZZI



# THE LOVE FOR THREE ORANGES

*The Love for Three Oranges* premiered at the  
Florida Children's Repertory Theatre of Orlando.

**Comedy.** *By Doreen B. Heard. Freely adapted from the scenario by Count Carlo Gozzi. Cast: 5m., 3w., with doubling, or up to 20+ (5m., 4w., 11 either gender) plus extras.* This delightful, fast-paced comedy is full of the broad and wacky humor of the commedia dell'arte, the Italian comedy theatre of olden times. It was written in 1761 for the commedia and derived from a southern European folktale. The kingdom of King Silvio is in an uproar. Prince Tartaglia never smiles and the inept court doctor, Il Dottore, cannot cure him. The impish jester Truffaldino and the king's advisor, Pantalone, decide to have a festival to cheer up the prince. The event backfires when the comical sorceress, Fata Morgana, puts a curse on the prince. He must search for three magic oranges belonging to the wicked fairy Creonta. The prince and Truffaldino capture the oranges, but then face many hilarious adventures before a surprise ending—after which all live happily ever after. *One set. Costumes of the 17th century. Approximate running time: 50 minutes. Code: LG9.*

## Family Plays

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098-3308

Phone: (800) 448-7469 / (815) 338-7170

Fax: (800) 334-5302 / (815) 338-8981

[www.FamilyPlays.com](http://www.FamilyPlays.com)

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“Produced by special arrangement with  
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To Linda, who has followed in my theatrical footsteps,  
this play is dedicated with much love.

## Time and Place:

Long ago in an imaginary kingdom.

## Characters:

TRUFFALDINO, the court jester  
KING SILVIO, ruler of the realm  
DOTTORE, the court doctor  
PANTALONE, adviser to the king  
PRINCESS CLARISSA, niece of King Silvio  
FATA MORGANA, a sorceress  
PRINCE TARTAGLIA, son of King Silvio  
CREONTA, a wicked fairy  
PRINCESS NINETTA, daughter of a faraway king  
2 zanni, strolling players, grotesques, courtiers

This play may be performed with eight actors by doubling. Clarissa and Creonta may be played by one actress, Ninetta may double as a Zanni, and various other actors may double as grotesques and strolling players. There would be no courtiers.

**THE LOVE FOR THREE ORANGES** was presented by the Florida Children's Repertory Theatre of Orlando, an adult professional company, at the Children's Theatre Festival at the Southeastern Theatre Conference in Jacksonville, Florida, in March 2001. The production toured to schools and was presented for the public in Orlando during February and March of 2001. The director was Stephen French, and the stage manager was Tiffany Maitland. The cast was as follows:

TRUFFALDINO	David Wisniewski
KING SILVIO	Greg Faucette
DOTTORE	Stephen French
PANTALONE	Gary Norris
PRINCESS CLARISSA	Alison Segura
FATA MORGANA	Elizabeth Judith
PRINCE TARTAGLIA	Jareb Dauplaise
CREONTA	Alison Segura
PRINCESS NINETTA	Tracy Martin
ZANNI	Stephen French Tracy Martin
GROTESQUES	Gary Norris Greg Faucette



## PRODUCTION NOTES

*The Love for Three Oranges* has been freely adapted from the eighteenth-century scenario *L'amore delle tre melarance* by the Italian playwright Count Carlo Gozzi. Basing his work upon a familiar southern European folk tale, Gozzi wrote the scenario in 1761 for production by the commedia dell'arte in Venice. *The Love for Three Oranges* was later made into a comic opera by Sergei Prokofiev and first performed in 1921 by the Chicago Opera Company. The opera is now part of the repertory of the New York City Opera, and the music is familiar to many in the form of an orchestral suite.

Gozzi's story exists today only in scenario form, not as a play, since it was written for the Italian improvisational theatre, the commedia dell'arte, that was popular throughout Europe for 200 years. Gozzi made use of stock characters who appear in various commedia productions. Examples of these characters are Pantalone (an old miser), Il Dottore (a "learned" doctor), Truffaldino (a type of Harlequin), and Zanni (comic servants). These characters appeared in many commedia plays, wearing traditional costumes and masks and performed by actors who specialized in those roles. Commedia plays were lively and full of slapstick comedy. The famous French playwright Molière was greatly influenced by the commedia, as was Shakespeare.

This version of *The Love for Three Oranges* is a fantastic fairy tale, full of broad comedy and performed in the lively spirit of the commedia. Settings should be minimal and easily changed by the two Zanni. Cards stating the locale of each scene should be placed by the Zanni on an easel down left out of the playing area. The music from the orchestral suite may be used throughout the play as needed. The "Marche" is particularly effective when used for the entrance of the strolling players and at the finale. It is recommended that the director and costumer consult sources in order to duplicate as nearly as possible the costumes and half-masks of the original commedia. These were traditional for the individual characters. For the "growing" oranges, we suggest plastic oranges first, then large orange balls, and then three huge oranges on a wagon so that they may be easily pulled with the princess inside. The large oranges can be constructed over very large beach balls with fiberglass strips. We had one huge ball in the center for the princess and two somewhat smaller ones on each side for the snake and spider.

An excellent source of information about the commedia dell'arte is the book *The Italian Comedy* by Pierre Louis Duchartre, published by Dover. This book has detailed information about the various commedia characters and plays with illustrations of original art showing the costumes and masks. The book is usually available in libraries. There are several other sources that will provide good information.

Most importantly, a production of this play should be fun! The wonderful, wacky comedic pacing must be maintained throughout. The children in the audience will have a wonderful time laughing and will learn about a very important type of theatre!

# The Love for Three Oranges

## Prologue

(Enter Truffaldino, the jester, turning cartwheels to the center of the stage. He is a type of Harlequin and wears a colorful costume with diamond patches. He bows with great flourish to each side of the audience in turn, and then hops up on a bench. He takes a kazoo from his pocket and blows a fanfare—which doesn't come out right the first time.)

TRUFFALDINO (*jumping down*)

Welcome! Welcome! Welcome! I am Truffaldino, the jester. And this  
(*indicating the entire area*)

is the kingdom of King Silvio. We are going to present a play for you today—a play that is

(*getting faster and faster*)

tragic, comical, historical, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragic-historical, tragic-comical-historical-pastoral . . .

(*pause—big breath*)

in short, a comedy! And the name of our play is *The Love for Three Oranges*. Now you shall meet the leading characters in our play. First, we have King Silvio, who is very sad because his son, the prince, is ill.

(*King Silvio, an old man, enters sadly, crosses to the opposite side and exits.*

*The characters come in a variety of entrances as they are introduced, giving a criss-cross effect.*)

TRUFFALDINO

And the king's adviser, old Pantalone—who really wants power for himself.

(*Pantalone, a wily miser whose main interest is money, hurries in through the audience, mumbling. He asks the children if they have any gold they can give him. Ad lib. He exits from the stage.*)

And then there is Prince Tartaglia, who never smiles. He hasn't smiled since before he was born—and only once then. We're very worried about him.

(*Tartaglia, a handsome young man wearing several extra sets of clothing, enters glumly, slowly crosses, pauses looking at*

*the audience, and exits on the opposite side.)*

TRUFFALDINO

Next we have Princess Clarissa, the niece of the king. She is jealous of the prince and wants the throne for herself.

*(Clarissa enters haughtily, circles the stage, and exits on the opposite side. She is cold and domineering.)*

And here is Dottore, the medical marvel who has a cure for everything – except what happens to ail you at the time he arrives.

*(Dottore enters with his bag and crosses to Truffaldino. He is a comic “scholar” who talks much but says little. He tries to examine Truffaldino’s ear with a huge horn, into which he peers.)*

DOTTORE *(as he looks into Truffaldino’s ear)*

It is a foregone conclusion that cranial disturbances are caused by a melifluous coagulation of the yellow bile which causes inter-cerebellar conflagration.

TRUFFALDINO *(scrambles away)*

Out! Go! Stay away from me!

*(He chases Dottore with his slapstick. Dottore exits, mumbling to himself.)*

That was a close call!

*(mysteriously)*

And now . . . thunder, please.

*(He signals to the “sky.” The sound of thunder is immediately heard and continues lightly under the dialogue.)*

The wicked fairy Creonta—who owns the three mysterious oranges.

*(Truffaldino runs to hide. Creonta, surrounded by dancing grotesques, sweeps onto the stage. She carries a tray with three oranges on it. After glaring at the audience, she exits on the opposite side. The thunder ceases. Creonta is ugly and powerful.)*

TRUFFALDINO *(returns to center, shudders)*

And here is the beautiful Princess Ninetta!

*(Princess Ninetta enters. She is young and lovely and smiles at the audience.)*

The prince finds her when he . . . oops!

*(He claps his hand over his mouth.)*

I almost let the secret out.

*(He bows to the princess, as he falls over his own feet.)*

Oh, your highness! Your highness!

*(Princess Ninetta exits on the opposite side.)*

And last but not least . . .

*(Confidentially)*

I have to say “not least” or she’ll cast an evil spell on me . . . there is the wicked sorceress Fata Morgana!

*(Fata Morgana sweeps down an aisle and onto the stage, laughing diabolically and tripping over her costume. She is inept in everything she does. Truffaldino scurries to hide. She circles menacingly but comically and leaves by a stage exit.)*

Whew! That was a close call! I thought she was going to turn me into a toad or something. And now—on with the play! We present *The Love for Three Oranges!*

*(The two Zanni run on with a sign announcing “The Throne Room.” They place the sign on an easel down left out of the playing area. King Silvio enters sadly, crosses to the throne and sits with his head bowed. Truffaldino speaks as the king enters.)*

Once there was a king who lived in an imaginary kingdom long, long ago. The king was in deep despair because his son, Prince Tartaglia, was very ill. So he called upon the court doctor for a diagnosis.

*(Truffaldino exits as Dottore, carrying a bag, enters from a different entrance.)*

DOTTORE *(bowing)*

Your Majesty.

KING *(raising his head)*

Il Dottore! How is the prince today?

DOTTORE *(darkly)*

Ah, I fear it is serious.

KING

Serious?

DOTTORE

Very serious.

KING (*more worried*)

Very serious?

DOTTORE

Very, very serious.

KING

Very, very serious?

DOTTORE

Very, very, very serious.

KING

Very, very, very seri . . .oh, stop this! What's wrong with the prince?

DOTTORE

I have tried everything.

*(He opens his bag and pulls out various items one by one: a large mallet, ice tongs, a huge pill, and a huge hypodermic needle.)*

I tried this . . . and this . . . and this . . . this nearly killed the poor fellow . . . and even this had no effect.

KING (*insisting*)

But what is the matter with him?

*(Dottore pulls out a long list—about eight feet long—from his bag. He unrolls the list, which trails on the floor.)*

DOTTORE

He has head-ache, stomach-ache, ear-ache, sore throat, sore finger, sore toe, sneezes, wheezes, freezes, hardening of the arteries, hardening of the head, hardening of the heart, blue blood, red blood, green blood—green blood?

*(shrugs)*

Oh,well—he has sciatica, lumbago, indigestion, and melancholia.

KING (moaning)

My poor boy! Oh, misery!

DOTTORE

A very serious case. A state of hypochondria that I judge to be incurable.

KING

What? Hypo—what?

DOTTORE (*impressively*)

Hypochondria.

KING (*wailing*)

My poor prince! What shall we do?

*(Pantalone enters, counting his money.)*

KING

Pantalone! My good friend and adviser, come here.

*(Pantalone glares at the doctor and speaks sarcastically.)*

PANTALONE

I see we are honored by the presence of the royal witch doctor.

DOTTORE

My dear Pantalone, the advice you give the king is so rotten it should be thrown out with the garbage.

*(Dottore accidentally tosses his list as he gesticulates. He goes after it. Pantalone kicks Dottore, as he bends over to pick up the list.)*

PANTALONE

Why, you . . . you quack!

*(Pantalone chases Dottore once around the stage. Dottore gathers up his belongings and exits fast.)*

PANTALONE (Cont.)

Out! Out of here! You couldn't cure a unicorn with an aching horn! Out!  
*(going back to the king)*

A thousand pardons, Your Majesty.

KING ( *pacing* )

Pantalone, Prince Tartaglia is so ill that he might die.

PANTALONE

What is wrong with him, Your Majesty?

KING ( *pacing* )

A case of incurable hypochondria.

PANTALONE

Hypochondria? You said hypochondria?

KING

Yes. If poor Tartaglia should die, my throne will go to my nasty niece Clarissa. Oh, woe is me!

*(Pantalone gently leads the king to the throne.)*

PANTALONE

Calm yourself, Your Majesty. Things aren't as bad as they seem.

KING

Oh, misery.

PANTALONE

The prince isn't really sick—he just thinks he's sick.  
*(getting wound up)*

This is a clear case of . . .

KING

But the doctor said he had sneezes, wheezes, freezes and . . .

PANTALONE

That medical monster! With hypochondria the prince only thinks he is sick. I have a plan, Your Majesty, that will cure the prince.

KING

What! What is it?

PANTALONE

We must make the prince laugh.

KING

Laugh? What good will that do?

PANTALONE

Ah, Your Majesty, it is the one way to cure hypochondria.  
*(getting wound up again)*

PANTALONE (Cont..)

The only sure cure out of the thousands of remedies that are available today. Not pills, not potions, not spells, not incantations . . . Laughter will cure the prince.

*(coming down)*

Now all we have to do is think of some way to make him laugh.

KING

It's no use. The prince hasn't laughed for years. Or even smiled.

PANTALONE

There must be something that will . . . I have it! We'll have a festival! A spectacle! A great entertainment! A marvelous . . .

KING

It's useless. We've already tried everything else.

PANTALONE

But not a festival. It might save the prince.

KING *(reluctantly)*

Well, all right. We'll try once more. A good entertainment will cheer up the court at least.

PANTALONE

Your Majesty must issue a decree. Now, who shall be in charge? Er . . . not me! I have to count my money . . . Of course! Truffaldino!

*(calling)*

Truffaldino! Truffaldino!

*(Truffaldino enters tumbling and falls. He crawls over to Pantalone and looks up at him mischievously.)*

TRUFFALDINO *(mocking)*

And what does the great Pantalone want of me?

PANTALONE

Not me, you fool, the king!

*(Truffaldino notices the king for the first time and bows frantically—very flustered.)*

TRUFFALDINO

Your Majesty!