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*Dramatic Publishing*



A FULL-LENGTH PLAY

# A Gap in Generations

created in the style of commedia dell'arte

by

JERRY BLUNT

with the members of

THE AFFAMATI COMPANY

*(The Hungry Ones)*

ROBERT ARMAND  
CYNTHIA CARLE  
ANTHONY DE FONTE  
KAREN FREDERICK  
ROD L. GIST  
JOSEPH HOFFMAN

JADE JESTINY  
PHIL KELLARD  
KATHI LIGHTSTONE  
STEVEN PRINGLE  
SANFORD ROBBINS  
MICHAEL SIMS

Optional Songs by BETTY ANDREWS



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY



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(A GAP IN GENERATIONS)

ISBN 0-87129-841-4

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## A GAP IN GENERATIONS

*A Full-Length Play*

For Nine Men, Five Women, Extras

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### CHARACTERS

MAESTRO (PANTALONE). . . . . *of the Affamati company*

MRS. MAESTRO (COLOMBINA) . . . . . *his wife*

MEMBERS OF THE COMPANY:

ARLECCHINO ] . . . . . *zannies*  
PEDROLINO ]

COLOMBINA ] . . . . . *maids*  
FRANCESCHINA ]

TOFANO DI SCATERELLI ] . . . . . *old men*  
PANTALONE DI BESIGNOSI ]

DR. GRAZIANO  
LELIO . . . . . *Pantalone's son*

ISABELLA ] . . . . . *Tofano's children*  
FLAVIO ]

VITTORIA . . . . . *a young lady*

ANTONIO ] . . . . . *servants*  
LUCIA ]

CAPITANO SPAVENTO . . . . . *an officer*

Servants, guests at the ball, townspeople, others as desired.

PLACE: *The University town of Bologna, Italy.*

TIME: *About 1550.*

## PROLOGUE

THE CURTAIN IS UP as the audience comes in, revealing a bare stage in front of a backdrop portraying a square in Bologna, circa 1550. Wings R and L as architectural forms enclose the space. Arches DR and DL are suggested. The onstage light, as the audience is coming in, is medium low.)

JUST BEFORE CURTAIN TIME the MAESTRO of the company, in traveling cloak and hat, enters through the DL arch. Back to audience, he checks the suitability of the area against the company's requirements. He also looks out over the audience as though estimating distances, and the size of the crowd. A gesture brings on two other members, his wife, (MRS. MAESTRO), who plays Colombina, and TOFANO DI SCATERELLI. They, too, are in traveling cloaks and hats. The three converse in dumb show, sizing up the area; apparently they agree upon its suitability. MRS. MAESTRO and TOFANO DI SCATERELLI leave. The MAESTRO takes a final look, then crossing DL he gestures the company on. The house lights dim, the stage lights come up as he crosses to C and addresses the holiday crowd.)

required----

MRS. MAESTRO. Oh, do not be afraid. We will not run away. Will we?

OTHERS. Oh, no, of course not.

CAPITANO SPAVENTO. You won't? You're sure?

MAESTRO. On our honor.

MRS. MAESTRO. On our honor.

CAPITANO SPAVENTO. Oh?

BOTH. We promise.

CAPITANO SPAVENTO. Then you just wait here, I'll be right back.

OTHERS. Good, hurry, be off, take your time.

MAESTRO. Trust us, we won't budge. (As CAPITANO SPAVENTO crosses out, the company members strike derogatory poses: thumbs in ears, etc. Just before leaving, CAPITANO SPAVENTO turns back. All snap back to ordinary poses.)

CAPITANO SPAVENTO. All right, then, don't move.

MRS. MAESTRO. Did you hear that, everyone? Don't move. (As CAPITANO SPAVENTO leaves, the company snaps back to the derogatory poses, in which they freeze, making appropriate noises. After a slight pause, the MAESTRO speaks.)

MAESTRO. There, you see. We are as good as our word.

MRS. MAESTRO. But in the meantime, we can't just stay frozen, can we? Not and keep you happy. And besides, if we know the military, we'll be through before he returns. So--(She snaps her fingers and the poses are released.) --while you wait, we'll continue with your entertainment. Maestro----

MAESTRO. Ladies and gentlemen--(At a wave of the hand, the scenic devices of the company

rise into place as the snare drum rolls. As soon as the false proscenium is set, the awning raised, the back wall for Pantalone's room pulled across upstage, the divan placed, and all else done, the company forms a semi-circle for:--The Affamati Company! (All bow as a unit.) And now that you may better recognize, in our new scenario, the familiar characters in their traditional costumes--(ARLECCHINO and PEDROLINO step out a pace, gesture to costumes, and step right back.)--make-up--(COLOMBINA and FRANCESCHINA step out and back, indicating faces.) --and masks--(TOFANO DI SCATERELLI and GRAZIANO also step forward and back, while PANTALONE DI BESIGNOSI holds up his own mask.)--we give you a sampling of the commedia's major character types of Lovers, Old Men, and Zannies or Servants. (Reader: for a fuller text of what follows, see Production Notes at end of script.) Let us start with youth. Ah, the wonder of love! (He frowns.) Love? Just listen. Can it be that these two, Lelio and Isabella--(LELIO and ISABELLA take one step forward.)--as they utter lines that are eternal, speak the language of love? Here they are--The Inamorati!

ALL (gesturing to them). The Inamorati! (ISABELLA and LELIO take hands and come DC together, but throw hands apart as they stand back to back.)

ISABELLA. Disperse----

LELIO. Dissolve----

ISABELLA. From my sight----

LELIO. From my eyes----

ISABELLA. I recoil----

LELIO. I curse----

are old friends--very old. I spoke to Dr. Graziano about my problem, and he said, "Desire? At your age? Ah, Tofano, it's all in your head." "Well, I know it's in my head," I replied, "I'd like to have it lowered a little." (And he goes back to his place.)

**MAESTRO.** And last, we give you another citizen of your fair city--a renowned professor of medicine from your great university. Over-ripe with learning, this remarkable man has studied everything, and understood nothing. He speaks, and his words are impressive. Here he is, the famous Dr. Graziano!

**ALL.** Dr. Graziano!

**GRAZIANO** (coming DC). Yes, I practice medicine for the sheer love of it. I nurse, I operate, I probe, I extract--(He is gathering speed and intensity.)--I dissect, I slice, I smash, I break, I rend, I dislocate, and I show no mercy whatsoever. I am a tornado of medicine, and the bane of all maladies, known and unknown! (He is down in intensity for a second build.) I eradicate all fevers and chills, the seven-year itch, gallstones, noisome flesh, plague, ringworm, gout, apoplexy and that dread scourge, rificifile! I wage unremitting warfare against all forms of illness. Oh, the patient may die, but I cure the disease! (Backs into line.)

**MAESTRO.** And now we give you--A Gap in Generations!

(The company bows and moves off DR and DL. **ARL-ECCHINO** immediately comes from UR and crosses below divan which was set in place earlier, RC, during the company's preparations.)



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# ACT ONE

## Scene One

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ARLECCHINO crosses down below the false proscenium to describe the scene which has been set up during the prologue. The drape which represents the back wall of Pantalone's house has been drawn into place and the cart-turned-divan has been placed at RC.)

ARLECCHINO. This is my master's house, Signor Pantalone di Besignosi. It is a very fine house, with exquisite furniture and hangings. (He pantomimes the non-existent items.) There are damask draperies, expensive paintings, done in oil, just like that fellow Titian does, and very special chairs and divans, marvelously constructed. If you see only one piece here now, it is because those fellows haven't had time to bring the rest on. But now you know the stuff is there--(Pointing offstage.)-- and nobody is cheating you, it's all right, eh? So-- we begin! But watch out, even in this fine house things go wrong. You are about to hear some fearful sounds. (He crosses up into the set.)

PANTALONE (off L). Oh, my God, help me! Arlecchino, you zanny, quick, quick. Do you hear me?

ARLECCHINO. Yes, Master, I hear you. I'm coming immediately, sooner or later. (Runs L, stops, turns back to C, points to something in the air.) Oh, a spider.

PANTALONE. Oh, my God, what a spasm! What a pain! Oh, help me.

ARLECCHINO (to audience). A lit-t-tle spider.

PANTALONE. Someone, anyone, help!

ARLECCHINO (still on spider in mid-air). He's unwinding.

PANTALONE. Antonio, Lucia--help me!

ARLECCHINO (calling off R, loudly). Antonio, Lucia--Master calls!

PANTALONE. Help, for God's sake.

(ANTONIO and LUCIA enter R.)

ANTONIO and LUCIA. Yes, yes, what is it? Yes, yes, who's calling?

ARLECCHINO. Run to the Master, quickly. We must all help him.

ANTONIO and LUCIA (crossing L and out). Be easy, Master. Here we are, don't strain. We are coming, Master, as fast as we can.

PANTALONE. You rogues, you zannies! Quick, take me in.

ANTONIO and LUCIA (together, as they bring him in). Master, do not bend over so, you'll die of the cramps. . . .Here, take my arm, rest on me.

(PANTALONE enters L, assisted by the servants.)

PANTALONE (stopping and bending). Oh, what a twist this is. I'm all in knots. The devil will have me before the day is over.

ANTONIO and LUCIA. Easy, Master, take care. Quiet, let us help you.

PANTALONE (seeing ARLECCHINO dangling the spider). Ah, there's the scoundrel. I'll teach you to desert me in my dying hour. (Swings

cane. ARLECCHINO ducks, PANTALONE does a full circle, but when his cane comes to ARLECCHINO again the latter grabs it, does a full turn himself and ends with the cane striking the master in the stomach.) Oh, my God, you've killed me.

ARLECCHINO. I'm just giving you your cane, Master.

PANTALONE. Oh, thank you, Arlecchino. (Realizes.) Oh, you son of a coal miner. (Starts to strike again but is stopped by another cramp.) Help, help me down. (ARLECCHINO and servants aid him to the divan) Have my son Lelio and the good Dr. Graziano been sent for?

ARLECCHINO. They'll be here shortly. Now you just lie down and save your strength.

PANTALONE. They had better hurry if they wish to comfort me in my last moments. (He is down.) Don't they realize they're imposing on me? I have to wait until they arrive before I die.

ARLECCHINO. Are you really that close, Master?

PANTALONE. Oh, yes, Arlecchino. Less than an hour.

ARLECCHINO (taking out a small hourglass). An hour? (Feeling the old man's forehead; it's wet.) Or would you say forty-five minutes?

PANTALONE (groaning). No, I think it's more like thirty-five minutes.

ARLECCHINO. Maybe you are not dying. Maybe it is something you ate.

PANTALONE. I am dying. It was not something I ate. I didn't eat anything. Just something to drink.

ARLECCHINO. Oh, oh! What?

PANTALONE. Nothing, just some wine.

ARLECCHINO. Wine? Is that all?

PANTALONE. Well--(Gathers their attention.)--we were sitting at the inn, my old friend Signor Tofano di Scaterelli, Dr. Graziano and I, drinking and recalling old times, when we were young and the terror of the town.

ARLECCHINO. Yes, we know, and the devil with the girls.

PANTALONE. Yes, and then Ruffiana the courtesan came by--you know, the Duke's mistress--and she was going to the Duke's, and we began to imagine all sorts of things--and then Tofano, the old fool, began to get excited---

OTHERS. Oh?

PANTALONE. And, well, I got excited too, and nothing would have it but that something must be done. We might be old, but we were too wise and experienced to go to--er--waste. Well, the upshot was that Graziano suddenly got very mysterious and, swearing us to secrecy--(Beckons others to move in.)--disclosed to us his knowledge of a magical potion. (Servants: "Magical!") Ssssh! an elixir of youth! (Servants: "Ah!") It was at his home. We went there. He closed himself in his study, while Tofano and I waited in his anteroom. With every sound that came from inside, our excitement rose to fever pitch. Finally he emerged with the elixir--(Reaction.)--and bade us follow him. We went through the dark streets to the cemetery where, at the exact moment when three clouds in the shape of an oyster cast themselves across the face of the moon, he said "Drink!" (Servants: "Ah!")--and we drank. Well, right away something happened

--it was--well, right away we went back to the inn and had some more wine, and then we went out on the town like two devils let loose out of hell, and then----

ARLECCHINO. And then I had to come along and get up the pieces and bring you home. This will be known as the year of the great hangover.

PANTALONE. Hangover? Hangover! (Suddenly feels an urge from his upset stomach.) Oh--oh, something is not right. Something is coming----

ARLECCHINO. Steady, Master, steady. (To servant at L.) Help--quickly--help! (Servant immediately runs off. ARLECCHINO uses his hands to fan PANTALONE.) Steady--steady.

PANTALONE. Oh, my. Oh, my, I have such a disturbance, it's--it's----

ARLECCHINO. Be calm, Master, be calm.

PANTALONE. Oh--oh----

ARLECCHINO (calling off). Help--help!

(Servant takes a couple of steps on, holding basin.)

SERVANT. Here, Master.

PANTALONE (seeing basin). Oh, no--no, not that!  
(Turns away.)

ARLECCHINO. Off, zanny, off. (Servant disappears.)

PANTALONE (after holding his breath for a moment, eases off and sighs). Oh, what a relief. I'm glad that spasm is over. (Settles back more comfortably.)

ARLECCHINO. That's it, Master, be easy. Your stomach is just queasy, that's all. It's natural that----

PANTALONE. Yes, it is. It's just--(Another spasm.)--queasy, did you say? Oh, my--oh, my! (This time he is rising.)

ARLECCHINO. Steady, Master, steady. (To other servant.) Help, quick, help! (Servant disappears offstage.) Calm yourself, Master, calm

yourself.

PANTALONE. Yes, yes, I must. But it's--oh, oh----

(Servant comes on with a chamber pot. PANTALONE sees it.)

SERVANT. Here, Master.

PANTALONE. What--what----

PANTALONE and ARLECCHINO. No, no, not that, not that! (PANTALONE turns away.)

ARLECCHINO. Out, you fool, out! (Servant exits.

ARLECCHINO helps PANTALONE down.) There, there, Master. Be steady, be calm.

PANTALONE (settling back). Oh, Dr. Graziano, where can you be?

ARLECCHINO. Now, don't take on so. Both he and your son will soon----

PANTALONE. Oh, Dr. Graziano, why are you taking so long to arrive? Help me, I'm dying.

(GRAZIANO enters.)

GRAZIANO (popping in). You sent for me? I am here. Dr. Graziano, at your service.

ARLECCHINO. How fortunate! He's just in time; who would have thought it?

GRAZIANO. I got your message, I came as fast as I could. I always hurry to the side of disease and death. But you should know I had to leave my class at the university, where my students awaited eagerly my lecture on the theories of Hippocrates, as interpreted by Galen, and given in my own inimitable style.

PANTALONE. Doctor?

GRAZIANO. Be quiet, you disturb me. (PANTALONE groans.)

ARLECCHINO. Quiet, Master, you are interrupting a very fluent case of vocal diarrhea.

GRAZIANO. Yes, I was just about to dissect the heart of my discourse when your messenger

interrupted my diagnosis. I was explaining to my students the adventrication of that splenic organ, the spleen, is a continuous fixed result when concretion of the upper bowel----

PANTALONE. Doctor, for God's sake!

GRAZIANO. Quiet!

ARLECCHINO. Quiet!

GRAZIANO. I was saying the adventrication of the spleen is a----

ARLECCHINO. Sh-h-h, Doctor, renowned sir. Here is a patient, wonderfully ill. (Draws GRAZIANO to PANTALONE's side. PANTALONE is sitting, head up, on divan.

GRAZIANO, confusing his actions, listens to the pulse. Then, taking the hourglass from ARLECCHINO, he checks the heart with a pumping motion of the hand.)

GRAZIANO. Oh, I see. Your heart is where your pulse should be, and your pulse is where your heart should be. Therefore, we must turn you around and readjust. Arlecchino! (GRAZIANO at the head, ARLECCHINO at the feet, they turn PANTALONE around so his feet are in the air and his head down at foot of divan.)

PANTALONE. Oh, my head, it's swelling. It's going to burst!

GRAZIANO. No desired state of the body is ever attained easily. Be patient. Think you to renew the full flow of life like that! (He tries to snap fingers; no sound.) Like that! (He tries again, fails.) Like--(ARLECCHINO makes sound for him.) Ahh! Youth is a prize all men seek. My medicine, the draft of which you drank last night, will restore your youth. It is a potion gleaned from a lifetime of study in the work of the ancients. Take heart, suffer. Thus we ring out the old, thus we achieve the

---

new. Again I say, youth will be yours!  
PANTALONE. Oh, my God, you've killed me!  
GRAZIANO. That's progress!

(LELIO enters, sees GRAZIANO.)

LELIO. Ah, Dr. Graziano is here, I see. You,  
Alecchino, announce me.

ARLECCHINO. Eh?

LELIO. Announce me!

ARLECCHINO. But your father----

LELIO. Announce me! Dr. Graziano is here,  
therefore it is a formal occasion.

ARLECCHINO. But your father, he is dying.

LELIO. Quote, all the more reason for haste.  
Announce me!

ARLECCHINO. What shall I say?

LELIO. Give my title.

ARLECCHINO. Your title? You're a nobleman?

LELIO. No, fool, my university title.

ARLECCHINO. But why?

LELIO. Idiot. Don't you know that student  
officers take precedence over ordinary mas-  
ters?

GRAZIANO. Me? Ordinary?

LELIO. You are only of the faculty. I am a  
student officer.

ARLECCHINO. An officer? You're an officer?  
(To others.) Did you hear that?

LELIO. Fool, I have the highest office. In the  
university, I am the student leader, superior  
to the faculty. I have many fine privileges.  
Of all the students, I, alone, need not go  
armed to class. And in the town, I am second  
only to the duke. In all processions I march  
only behind him. Ahead of cardinals and  
mayors, even. I am Rector.