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## **Family Plays**

# The Divine Commedia

Comedy by  
**JOHN EVARTS**



# The Divine Commedia

Produced by all three middle schools in the Denton Independent School District in Texas, in 2001, *The Divine Commedia* was invited to perform at the Texas State Thespian Conference in Wichita Falls, where it received a standing ovation.

**Comedy. By John Evarts. Cast:** 11m., 5w., extras. A troupe of commedia players attempts to present a play, but they are quickly shut down by Father Federico, the local priest. Needing to perform in order to eat, the actors change their play to the story of Adam and Eve. The story takes on a new twist as it is shaped to the personalities of the commedia stock characters: Arlechinno, the mischievous servant; Pantalone, the lecherous miser; Puchinella (Puccio), the ill-tempered humpback; Dottore (Doctor), the academic windbag; Pedrolino, the simple-minded fool; Capitano (Captain), the braggart soldier who is a coward at heart; and the two lovers, Isabella and Flavio—more in love with love than each other. Author John Evarts says the low humor and slapstick of commedia may seem an odd choice to wed to a Bible story, but this type of humor was a major part of the dramatized Bible mystery plays of the Middle Ages. *One ext. set: the town square of a small Italian village. Time: late 16th century. The large, flexible cast includes the players and villagers. Approximate running time: 50 minutes. Code: DD5.*

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The Divine Commedia

# THE DIVINE COMMEDIA

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by JOHN EVARTS

**Family Plays**

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

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JOHN EVARTS

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This play was originally produced by all three middle schools in the Denton Independent School District (Calhoun Middle School, McMath Middle School, Strickland Middle School) in Denton, Texas during October 2001. It was directed by Sabrina Burgert. Produced by Karen Gossett with costumes by Barbara Stafford. The production was invited to perform at the Texas State Thespian Conference in Wichita Falls where it received a standing ovation.

Arlechinno (Snake)	Bradley Rogers
Dottore (Archangel)	Cody Early
Flavio (Adam)	Kyle Johnson
Pantalone (Master)	Thomas Carter
Isabella (Eve)	Laura Hopkins
Puccio (Bird)	Trevor Sewell
Peppe Nappa	Jessica Severance
Capitano	Kirby Enoch
Columbina (Bird)	Jessie Devall
Pedrolino	Bailey Lenart
Servette	Elizabeth Shoemaker
Father Federico	Keith Sprabeary
Nun #1	Sandy Masciarelli
Nun #2	Vanessa Blume-Webb
Prince Caspari	Jarvis Hodge
Soldier	Daniel Carter
Musicians	Will Frenkel, Alison Paul, Cato Platt & Becca Walters
Townspeople	Patricia Judy, Cato Platt & Ana Seaton
Assistant Directors	Victoria Scheider & Patricia Judy
Lights	Derek Deiterman

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

**ARLECHINNO**—The leader of the commedia troupe, he uses all his wits to keep the performance going over the objections of the town priest. In the story of Adam and Eve, Arlechinno takes on the role of the serpent (the tempter).

**DOTTORE**—An academic windbag. He will play the role of archangel.

**FLAVIO**—A great lover. He will play the role of Adam.

**ISABELLA**—A great lover. She will play the role of Eve.

**PANTALONE**—A lecherous miser. Pantalone will assume the role of God.

**PUCCIO**—More commonly known as Puchinella. He is a mean tempered humpback with a high squeaky voice. He will play the role of a hen-pecked bird.

**COLUMBINA**—A sharp tongued beauty. She will play the role of a bird who hen-pecks her husband, Puccio.

**PEPPE NAPPA**—The prop master of the troupe. He speaks with a ridiculous Italian accent like Chico Marx. He will take on the role of an angel.

**PEDROLINO**—A noble hearted fool who thinks with his stomach. He will play the role of an angel and later will play the role of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

**CAPITANO**—A braggart soldier, he is really a great coward. He will play the role of the angel who guards the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

**SERVETTE**—a sassy serving girl. She flirts with the audience at every opportunity.

**FATHER FEDERICO**—the local priest. He genuinely wishes to protect the people of his village from corruption.

**PRINCE CASPARI**—He stays incognito as part of the audience until the end of the play.

**NUNS, TOWNSPEOPLE, SOLDIERS and MUSICIANS**

*Time:* The late 16th Century.

*Setting:* The town square of an Italian village.



## ABOUT THE PLAY

A troupe of commedia players attempt to present a play but are quickly shut down by Father Federico, the local priest. Needing to perform in order to eat, the actors change their play to the story of Adam and Eve. The story takes on a new twist as it is shaped to the personalities of the commedia stock characters: Arlechinno—the mischievous servant, Pantalone—the lecherous miser, Puchinella (Puccio)—the ill tempered humpback, Dottore (Doctor)—the academic windbag, Pedrolino—the simple minded fool, Capitano (Captain)—the braggart soldier who is a coward at heart, and the two lovers Isabella and Flavio—more in love with love than with each other.

## A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Commedia dell'arte is a form of improvised comedy, which began in Italy during the 16th century and remained popular throughout Europe for over two hundred years. Story outlines or “scenarios” were followed by the actors who portrayed commedia’s various stock characters.

Toward the end of the 16th century, commedia spread to France and other parts of Europe. Many believe that the troupes were forced out of Italy by the counter-reformation. The Catholic church, having been torn apart by the Protestant movement, took a more active role enforcing stricter standards of public morality. Theatre, which has always had a less than pure reputation, was an easy target for such a movement. But instead of destroying commedia, forcing the troupes out of Italy and into France actually played an important part in developing the Italian comedy into what would be its golden age.

There have been many commedia style scripts written and published. Most of them are treatments of familiar fairy tales such as Cinderella or Pinocchio. “The Divine Commedia” is an attempt to apply the commedia style of comedy to a familiar Bible story. At first glance, the low humor and vulgar slap stick of commedia may seem an odd choice to wed to a Bible story, but in fact, this type of humor was a major part of the dramatized Bible mystery plays of the middle ages. I have always been fascinated by the relationship between the sacred and the profane. There is a fine line where these two opposites meet, and carefully balanced on that fine line is where the truth is often found. I hope that as the story of Adam and Eve is twisted and pulled by the comedic forces of the commedia, we will find new truth and understanding about man’s relationship to himself and the universe around him.

—John Evarts

## PRODUCTION NOTES

*Properties*

Puccio—slapstick  
Capitano—slapstick, sword  
Arlechinno—slapstick  
Isabella—Rosary  
Columbina—feathers, ribbons  
Servette—basket of flowers, frying pan, mirror  
Pedrolino—chicken leg  
Peppe Nappa—club, zanni mask with a very long nose  
Adam—flower  
Dottore—book, pen  
Eve—flowers (worn in hair)

**TO MASK OR NOT TO MASK?*****And some suggestions on how to do it.***

In Commedia, some characters are masked and others are not. Columbina, Servette, Isabella and Flavio do not wear masks. Pedrolino and Peppe Nappa wear a white clown makeup instead of a mask. Arlechinno, Pulcinella, Dottore, Pantalone, and Capitano traditionally wear half masks—a mask that covers the actor's face from the top of the forehead to just below the actor's nose, leaving the mouth uncovered. Originally these masks were made of leather and form fitted to the face of an actor who would play that one part his entire career. Many examples of these masks can be found on the internet using a good search engine (search for either "commedia mask" or the character's name). If you wish to purchase these masks ready made, an internet search will also find a number of companies that sell them. Commedia masks can range in price from just under \$50 for a papier mache mask to close to \$200 for an actual leather mask. If the cost of buying a set of masks is prohibitive, don't despair. You still have several excellent options.

**Not to Mask.** The only mask that is essential to this play is the serpent mask. If you have actors who have trouble projecting their voices through a mask, or if you have actors who naturally have great facial expressions, you might want to consider not using masks. I have directed Commedia productions that did not use masks. If you do not use masks, you can still create a strong sense of Commedia character through the use of rubber

noses, clown noses, and makeup. The most striking features of a commedia mask tend to be the character's nose and forehead. Makeup does an excellent job of shaping the eyebrows and creating wrinkles and warts. Large rubber noses can be a lot of fun. It is even perfectly acceptable to use an elastic strap to hold on the nose. Remember, you are creating the essence of a mask and not a realistic makeup.

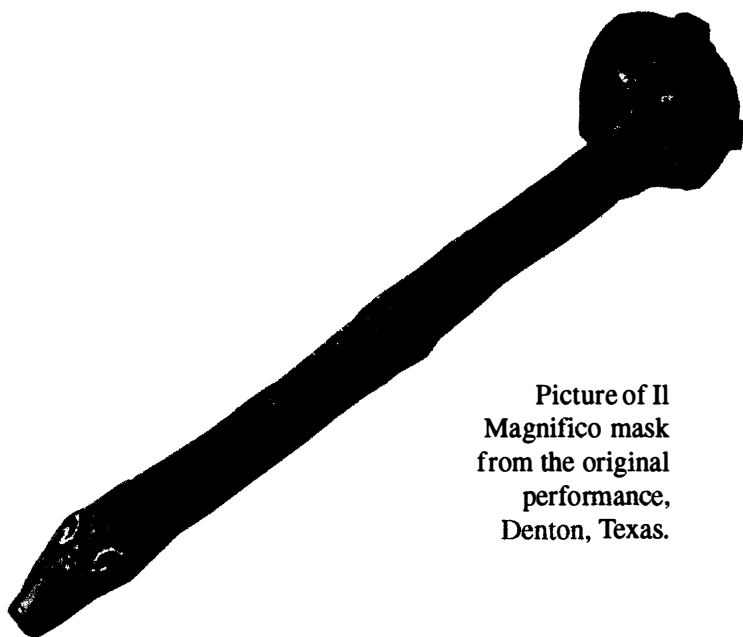
**To Mask.** If you want to have a truly authentic Commedia look, you probably want to use masks. If you can't afford to buy them, the alternative is to make them. There are many methods of making masks (an internet search can provide all types of information on the subject.) Whatever method you use, I recommend that you not start from scratch but begin with a sturdy plastic plain half mask or masquerade mask which can be purchased from most costume shops. To make the masks with papier mache, use the plastic half mask as a base on which to build the mask. That way your finished product will be the right size and shape to fit the actor's face. The nose, wrinkles, brows, etc. can be built up with clay on the base, and then the whole thing should be coated with a release agent (such as vasoline). The papier mache can be applied. Once dry, the mask should be carefully removed from the base. Any remaining bits of clay should be removed, and the mask can then be painted.

If you don't want to go to the trouble or mess of papier mache, there is a much simpler method. Begin with a heavy plastic half mask. If a half mask is not available, you can cut down a full neutral mask. Adjust the mask to fit your actor by trimming it with scissors. Make sure that the eyes fit comfortably and that the mask does not cover the actor's upper lip. Shapes can be cut out of felt or sheets of craft foam and hot-glued to the mask to create the features of the forehead — brows, wrinkles, and warts. Most costume shops carry a variety of different rubber noses — for witches, Cyrano, and other grotesque characters. Select a rubber nose that fits the character and glue it onto the mask. (Note: hot-glue will not bond with rubber. You will need to purchase a craft glue that does at your local hobby shop or art supply store.) Paint the mask. Once you have painted the mask a solid color, use your knowledge of makeup techniques. Highlights and shadows can really make the features and wrinkles stand out.

Finally, whether you use papier mache, foam, or felt to build your mask, don't forget hair. Crepe hair and pre-made mustaches (available from

most costume or craft shops) can be glued onto the mask to create such commedia trademarks as Pantalone's bushy white eyebrows and Capitano's long flowing mustache. Be creative and enjoy!

**A word about "Il Magnifico":** Creating a mask with an extremely long nose can be challenging. A long thin balloon (such as those used to form animals) can serve either as the base for a papier mache nose or even attached to the finished mask. Cones of craft foam or posterboard can also be used to form the nose. If you try to make the nose from felt or other heavy materials, you may need to insert a wooden dowel to help support the nose. Because of the weight of the nose, it will be necessary to attach not only an elastic from ear to ear, but also a strap of the mask over the crown of the actor's head and attaches to the middle of the other elastic (running from ear to ear). Don't be afraid to experiment and have fun! That's what the commedia style is all about.



Picture of Il  
Magnifico mask  
from the original  
performance,  
Denton, Texas.

# THE DIVINE COMMEDIA

by JOHN EVARTS

*[SETTING: The town square of a small Italian village. There is a platform with a curtain across the back of it. The curtain has a slit in it so that actors may make center stage entrances. The curtain is also low enough that an actor could easily stand on a box behind it and be seen from the shoulders up.]*

*AT RISE: Some of the VILLAGE RESIDENTS have already begun to seat themselves at the foot of the platform. A PAIR OF NUNS enter just as ARLECHINNO steps forth from the curtain.]*

ARLECHINNO. Welcome friends! Welcome one and all! Today we perform for you love's greatest folly—the comedy of Romeo and Juliet!

*[NUNS quickly scurry away from the stage and exit to get the local priest]*

Two great households alike in foolish vanity  
In fair Verona where we set our scene.

*[DOTTORE and FLAVIO enter from one side of the curtain and take their place. PANTALONE and ISABELLA enter from the other side of the stage and take their places]*

Both families now have looked on better days,  
And secretly both fathers plot and scheme  
To marry off their child for wealthy gain.  
Senor Pantalone guards well the priceless virtue of his lovely Juliet.

And entrusts that virtue to the loving care of this, her nurse...

*[ARLECHINNO gestures toward where the nurse is to appear, but she does not]*

I said...the loving care of this, her nurse...

*[Still no appearance by the nurse]*

Oh, nurse! Nurse Puccio! We're waiting.

*[At that moment, PEPPE NAPPA sticks his head out from the curtain and yells]*

PEPPE NAPPA. We gotta no nurse. Puccio! Hey Puccio! Capitano, you seen Puccio?

CAPITANO. *[Sticks his head out from the curtain]* No. Where it is that worthless chicken? Hey, Pulcino! Little chicken!

PUCCIO. *[Enters struggling to get a dress on]* I'm coming! I'm coming! This dress got stuck.

PEPPE NAPPA. What's a matter fo' you? You no hear us? We calla your name, Puccio!

CAPITANO. That's the problem, Peppe. We called for Puccio when we should have called for Pulcino! Right, little chicken?

PUCCIO. I'll show you who's the chicken! *[PUCCIO charges at CAPITANO with his slapstick held high. ARLECHINNO sticks out his foot and trips PUCCIO]*

ARLECHINNO. Enough of your squawking, Pulcinella! Get into that dress and play the nurse, little chicken!

*[PUCCIO attacks Arlechinno with his slapstick. ARLECHINNO takes out his own slapstick and battles back. The CROWD of townspeople cheers on the fighters as FATHER FEDERICO enters with two or three SOLDIERS and the NUNS trailing behind]*

FEDERICO. Enough of this noise! Peace! Be still! Sergeant, clear the square! There will be no play today!

*[The SOLDIERS move toward the crowd to begin clearing the square. The CROWD reacts with hostility which makes the SOLDIERS hold off]*

ARLECHINNO. No play? What does this mean, sir? I am the master of this troupe. On whose authority do you stop my play?

FEDERICO. On the authority of the Holy Mother Church. I am Father Federico and these people gathered here are my flock.

ARLECHINNO. Your Holiness! *[He throws himself at Federico's feet and grovels]* We are but poor Christian souls. What harm can there be in our simple entertainments?

FEDERICO. What harm indeed! Do you expect me to stand by and watch my people's minds poisoned with your wickedness?

ARLECHINNO. Wickedness, your Grace?

FEDERICO. Yes, wickedness! [*He points at different members of the company as he names different sins*] Greed! [*Pantalone*] Sloth! [*Peppe*] Gluttony! [*Arlechinno*] Envy! [*Dottore*] Wrath! [*Puccio*] Pride! [*Capitano*] Lust! [*As FEDERICO points at Isabella, he suddenly realizes that she is a woman and not a man playing a woman*] What blasphemy is this? A woman? A woman on the stage? Sergeant, remove this creature at once!

CAPITANO. [*Leaps in front of Isabella and brandishes his sword*] Keep back! Keep back, I say, or with one fiery blast from my nostrils I will burn the very flesh off your bones and crush those bones into dust with my bare hands. [*The SOLDIERS step forward and take Isabella and Capitano by the arm. CAPITANO falls to his knees*] Ah! My arm! Don't hurt me. Please. Not so rough.

PUCCIO. Now we see, who the real chicken is.

ISABELLA. Unhand us at once! [*The SOLDIER does not unhand her*] So tell me, Father Federico, is this how you care for your flock?

FEDERICO. My flock?

ISABELLA. Yes, Father. [*She pulls out a Rosary from her gown*] Am I not also a baptized member of your flock? Why, you heard my confession this morning.

FEDERICO. Forgive me, daughter, I cannot always remember all of the many...Sergeant, release the girl at once.

PUCCIO. Which one? [*He breaks into laughter and rolls on the floor. The SOLDIERS release both Isabella and Capitano. ISABELLA grips Puccio's shoulder. He stops laughing immediately*]

ISABELLA. No more pranks, little chicken. Our supper is slipping away from us.

ARLECHINNO. Most Holy Father, please. You rob us of our daily bread. I have a wife. [*COLUMBINA enters and stands at Arlechinno's side*] I have a child. [*PEDROLINO enters and stands at the other side of Arlechinno*]

SOLDIER. Wait a bit! Isn't he too old to be your son?

PEPPE NAPPA. We try to tell him. But he no count so good.

ARLECHINNO. Our play is but an innocent diversion.

FEDERICO. Innocent? The comedy of Romeo and Juliet? It ends in a double suicide.

COLUMBINA. Perhaps another play.

ARLECHINNO. Yes. We know many plays.

FEDERICO. And every one of them filled with the sins of the world. No, I fear I could not trust one of your plays where my children are concerned.

ARLECHINNO. Perhaps then, your worship, we could perform one of yours.

FEDERICO. One of mine?

ARLECHINNO. Certainly, your grace. A play from the Bible.

FIRST NUN. Oh, David and Goliath! That's my favorite!

SECOND NUN. Sister, please.

PEPPE NAPPA. Jonah in the fish! We gotta the fish!

*[The CROWD yells out the titles of various Bible stories]*

ISABELLA. Father Federico, since a woman's presence upon this stage has upset you so, why not let my presence be of some goodly use. I shall play fair Eve to show all those here how evil first came into the world through woman's weakness.

FEDERICO. As you wish, my child *[To Arlechinno]* You have this play in your repertoire?

ARLECHINNO. But of course. If we know the story, then it's in our repertoire. And we do know the story, right? *[To the other members of the troupe who all acknowledge agreement except for PEDROLINO who stupidly shakes his head no]* Pedrolino, the prologue!

PEDROLINO. *[Terrified since he doesn't really know the story]* In the beginning, there was nothing. And it was really dark. So dark, you couldn't see nothing, but even if you could see, you still couldn't see nothing, 'cause that's all there was to see...nothing! *[He suddenly loses his thought]* Uh...what was I saying?

CROWD. *[Shouting as one]* Nothing!

PEDROLINO. Right! Nothing to see. And what was worse, there was nothing to eat. *[As he speaks, he and the CROWD become hungrier and hungrier, almost drooling at the thought of each succulent dish he mentions]* There was no noodles. No spaghetti with meatballs. No linguine in a white creamy Alfredo sauce. No rigatoni...

CROWD MEMBER. With little bits of pepper and sausage?

PEDROLINO. Not even sprinkled with a light parmigiana. But still, nobody went hungry.

CROWD MEMBER. How come?

PEDROLINO. 'Cause there wasn't nobody around to be hungry. And then the Lord said... *[He gestures to Federico to finish the statement, ALL eyes are on Federico who suddenly realizes all are looking at him]*

FEDERICO. Yes?

ARLECHINNO. If your worship would be so kind.



FEDERICO. *[Rises; extends his arm in a ceremonious gesture]* Oh yes, certainly. Let there be...

PEDROLINO. *[Cutting off Federico]* and there was! First there was light and then there was dark. Then there was day and there was night. And before you know it, there was even a place to stand. And what do you know, pretty soon here come the animals. Plump delicious chickens! Succulent little piggies! And sheep, for all the mutton lovers out there.

*[The CROWD smacks its lips and moans with gluttonous pleasure]*

ARLECHINNO. Perhaps, Father, it might be wise to move this along. The fool will devour Creation before it even happens!

FEDERICO. *[Interrupting]* And God said...

PEDROLINO. Hey! I wasn't finished.

COLUMBINA. *[Pulling Pedrolino off stage]* Oh yes, you were! Please continue, Father!

FEDERICO. And God created man!

FLAVIO. *[Stepping forward]* That would be me. Here am I, Adam! First man made in the Almighty's image. First to stroll through Eden's fair garden.

FIRST NUN. That's not right. He should be naked.

SECOND NUN. *[Shocked]* Sister!

CROWD MEMBER. The sister's right. Off with his clothes!

ANOTHER CROWD MEMBER. That's right, popinjay! Shed your pretty feathers!

FEDERICO. I will stand no more of this shameless display! This play is over!

ARLECHINNO. Please Father, I have a solution that should offend no one's modesty.

*[ARLECHINNO speaks to Flavio. FLAVIO then steps behind the curtains. Stepping up on a bench or cube, FLAVIO appears above the curtain from the shoulders up. He loosens his shirt so that he may pull down the shoulders and appear as though unclothed]*

FLAVIO. How fair is Eden's garden. Her beauty dances all about me.

*[ARLECHINNO leaps into a dance and is quickly joined by COLUMBINA who adds some colorful props to the dance—perhaps feathers or ribbons]*

See there! The bird of paradise and his lovely mate. See how they celebrate the wondrous abundance that buzzes all about us.

*[SERVETTE appears from behind the curtain carrying a basket of flowers, which she scatters about the stage as she “buzzes”. She is stalked by a very lecherous PANTALONE]*

Look! Even the bees celebrate the glory of Eden.

*[PANTALONE throws his arms around Servette’s waist. SERVETTE squeals with delight and breaks free. PANTALONE chases her about the stage. ARLECHINNO and COLUMBINA continue their dance]*

FIRST NUN. Isn’t it beautiful, Father! The birds and the bees.

SECOND NUN. Quiet, sister!

ADAM/FLAVIO. How happy these creatures all seem. Yet, why should they not be so? For each is coupled to its perfect mate. How beautiful it all seems and yet how strangely sad. For though I look over all creation, I see no mate for me. *[He sighs deeply and with great melancholy]* Ah, me. Surrounded by such loveliness, yet so alone. *[He sighs again]*

FIRST NUN. *[To Federico]* Father, how can you bear to see him suffer so?

SECOND NUN. Hold your tongue, girl.

CROWD MEMBER. The sister’s right! Eve! Where is Eve? Bring her on at once!

*[The CROWD calls out for Eve to take her place. ISABELLA finally appears from around the curtain]*

EVE/ISABELLA. Yes? Did someone call for me?

FIRST NUN. Eve, go to Adam. Can’t you see how lonely he is?

CROWD. Yes, Adam needs you. Go to him.

EVE/ISABELLE. But alas, I cannot.

FEDERICO. And why is that, my child?

EVE/ISABELLA. I wait upon the Lord. *[She gestures to Father Federico to indicate he should proceed]*

FEDERICO. You wait upon...? Oh yes, of course my child. You do wait upon the Lord. *[EVE/ISABELLA goes behind the curtain as FEDERICO stands up and takes on his part]* And God, in his great wisdom, created...

DOTTORE. *[Interrupting and taking the stage]* Wisdom? Did you say wisdom, your grace? I wondered when my particular skills would be required.

CAPITANO. The Father said “great wisdom”. This part is beyond you.

FEDERICO. And who might you be?

DOTTORE. Dottore Gratiano, your eminence. A scholar of great renown—I’m sure you’ve heard of me.

FEDERICO. No. I cannot say I have.

DOTTORE. Indeed? I am known far and wide as a great wit.

ARLECHINNO. Well, he’s half right.

FEDERICO. And what need would the Almighty have with you, Dottore?

DOTTORE. What need? Why to help solve the great paradox of paradise itself. To unravel a riddle that would stretch wisdom to such an extreme, Heaven itself trembles with the fear that all knowledge will be broken. Angels, attend me!

*[PEPPE NAPPA enters from the curtain pulling PEDROLINO with him]*

PEPPE NAPPA. Hey Pedrolino, we’re on!

DOTTORE. My fellow angels, you know of course the great work that the Lord Almighty has entrusted to our intellectus supremos.

*[DOTTORE looks at PEPPE NAPPA who nods his head and PEDROLINO who shakes his head stupidly]*

PEPPE NAPPA. What’s a matter you, Pedrolino? Pay attention! You tell him, Dottore.

DOTTORE. To create a suitable mate for Adam. A mate made in Adam’s own image. That is to say—made in the image of our Lord God and creator. *[ALL three cross themselves]*

PEPPE NAPPA. At’s a good! So whatta we gotta do?

DOTTORE. Indeed. An excellent question, brother angel. Attend to me now. What we have here is the great mystery of the chicken and the egg. No doubt, you are familiar with this question.

PEPPE NAPPA. Sure. Whatta you think, Pedrolino. Should we eat the egg for breakfast or wait for it to hatch and have chicken for dinner? *[PEDROLINO shrugs stupidly. PEPPE NAPPA turns back to Dottore]* So where’s the egg?

DOTTORE. There is no egg.

PEPPE NAPPA. Okay. Where's the chicken?

DOTTORE. There is no chicken.

PEPPE NAPPA. What's a matter you? You just wanna make us hungry?

PEDROLINO. I'm hungry, Peppe.

PEPPE NAPPA. You always hungry, Pedrolino.

DOTTORE. No, my friends. I am simply addressing the problem at hand by placing it on a metaphysical plane through the use of a metaphorical conceit.

PEPPE NAPPA. You know, maybe you speak the same language we do, we understand you better.

DOTTORE. Observe—Where do you get a chicken?

PEDROLINO. From my uncle's backyard. But only when he's not home.

DOTTORE. No! No! Where do chickens come from?

PEPPE NAPPA. Easy! An egg!

DOTTORE. Exactly! And where do eggs come from?

PEDROLINO. A chicken?

DOTTORE. Aha!

PEDROLINO. Aha what?

DOTTORE. So, where do you get the egg if you don't have a chicken? Or the chicken if you don't already have an egg? What do you do then?

PEPPE NAPPA. Make macaroni instead.

DOTTORE. Will you two stop thinking about your stomach for one moment! I am discussing the case of poor Adam here. Don't you see what we must do to create for him a mate?

PEDROLINO. Wait for him to lay an egg?

PEPPE NAPPA. I no know. He no gotta the feathers.

DOTTORE. No! Don't you see? The answer lies within the province of *Agriculturum Botanicus*.

PEDROLINO. Huh?

DOTTORE. Clippings, gentlemen, clippings. How does the farmer create one grape vine from another, but through the use of clippings?

PEPPE NAPPA. I no know. He also no gotta the leaves.

DOTTORE. But he does have ribs. Ribs which I propose we remove from Adam and then use to create his mate.

PEDROLINO. Can we do that?

DOTTORE. Alas, no. But the great Lord God Almighty [*They cross themselves again*] he can do such miracles. Our task will be to remove

this rib from Adam so that the Almighty can work his wonders upon it. Angels away!

*[DOTTORE, PEPPE NAPPA, and PEDROLINO go behind the curtain with Adam]*

PEDROLINO. *[His head popping up next to Adam]* Hey, Senor Adam, sir.

*[ADAM turns to face Pedrolino. PEPPE NAPPA pops up on the other side of Adam and hits him over the head with a club knocking him out. As ADAM disappears behind the curtain with PEPPE NAPPA and PEDROLINO, DOTTORE'S head briefly pops up to address the audience]*

DOTTORE. And now, the Lord shall work this mighty miracle!

*[DOTTORE disappears. There is a great collection of NOISES from behind the curtain. Sawing, hammering, chopping, banging, etc. Finally, ADAM and EVE both pop up behind the curtain. Both with shoulders of their tops pulled down low enough to give the illusion of nudity]*

ADAM. What strange sleep came over me? And who is this before me? Could this be a creature of my own kind? What is your name, beautiful creature?

EVE. Whatever name it pleases you to call me, sir. For I am bone of your bone and flesh of your flesh.

ADAM. Then I shall call you Eve. For reflected in your eyes, I see the close of a perfect day.

*[Just then PEPPE NAPPA enters from around the curtain followed by PEDROLINO. PEDROLINO is eating a chicken leg]*

PEPPE NAPPA. At'sa good, Pedrolino. We do good work!

CROWD MEMBER. What's that he's eating. Look! Was that part leftover?

CROWD. *[Laughing]* Sure. Leftovers! Hey, Pedrolino, how are the ribs?

FEDERICO. *[Furious]* What? Cannibalism? This is an abomination!

ARLECHINNO. Please, your Worship. He meant nothing by it. He wasn't thinking. Were you, Pedrolino?

PEDROLINO. I never think, Arlechinno. It hurts too much.

ARLECHINNO. You see? He was just hungry. That's all. Nothing more than that. *[Swatting Pedrolino with his slapstick. Throughout the abuse, PEDROLINO maintains a stone-faced blank stare]* Fool! You have angered his grace! Be gone before your dim witted clowning costs us our dinner! *[PEDROLINO leaves the stage. ARLECHINNO clears his throat and begins again]* And now, my friends, the comedy begins. For here another story will unfold.

CAPITANO. *[To Peppe Nappa]* What? Do we take on a new tale? *[He parries his sword about and catches his thigh. Bending over in pain, CAPITANO reveals his new tail]* Which one now?

PEPPE NAPPA. Jonah in the fish. We gotta the fish.

PANTALONE. By my beard no! I'll not play Gepetto again.

PEPPE NAPPA. *[To Capitano]* Hey! We gotta the ladder.

CAPITANO. So?

PEPPE NAPPA. You know—Jacob? Jacob's ladder?

PANTALONE. What about Jacob's ladder?

PEPPE NAPPA. I no know, but we gotta the ladder.

ARLECHINNO. You misunderstand me. Hold your silly tongues and lend an ear. We must begin the interlude again:

*[A small ENSEMBLE OF INSTRUMENTS is formed which begin a pleasant tune]*

And now my friends the comedy begins!

For here another story will unfold.

A fool's parade of lunacy and strife.

The courtship of the world's first man and wife!

*[ADAM and EVE cross to opposite sides of the stage and deliver directly to the audience an alternating poetic monologue]*

ADAM. By morning light

EVE. By evening moon

ADAM. What wondrous sight?

EVE. What sweet sung tune?

ADAM. Excites my eye!

EVE. Delights my ear with joy I do not understand!