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Family Plays

KING STAG

**Comedy
by
Stanley Vincent Longman**

**From the play
by
Carlo Gozzi**

KING STAG

Comedy. By Stanley Vincent Longman. From the play by Carlo Gozzi. *Cast: 9m., 3w., 4 either gender.* *King Stag* takes place in a theatre where we see the kingdom of Serendippo appear before our eyes with the help of the great and magnificent wizard, Durandarte. At issue is the wish of King Deramo to find an honest woman to be his queen. He does so with the help of the wizard's invention, a statue whose smiles can alert the king to lies and dishonesty. Unfortunately, his prime minister, Tartaglia, wickedly undermines his trust, his government and his marriage. Arlecchino, the zany clown, conducts us through Serendippo, where we are treated to surprising transformations. Deramo can be the king one moment and the stag the next; Tartaglia, the evil counselor, can turn himself into the king; and magical sprites turn into animals in the enchanted forest of Roncislappé. Paranoia threatens to unravel the whole kingdom, especially through the inept maneuvering of Capitano Spavento (head of the secret service) and his two henchmen, Cric and Crac. In the midst of this, romantic love blossoms between King Deramo and Angela, comic love between Leandro and Clarice, and farcical love between Arlecchino and Smeraldina. And it is love that emerges triumphant in this riveting and hilarious comic fantasy. *Area staging. Approximate running time: 2 hours, 15 minutes. Code: K43.*

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STANLEY VINCENT LONGMAN

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(KING STAG)

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King Stag was first produced at the University of Georgia in Athens, Ga., from April 28 to May 2, 1998. The premiere was performed by the University Theatre under the direction of Stanley Vincent Longman with sets designed by Julia Zheng and costumes by Tina Hantula.

CAST

(In order of appearance.)

ARLECCHINO.....	John Brandt
DURANDARTE	Jeremy Bales
BRIGHELLA.....	Jamie Pownall
SMERALDINA.....	Jeanne Van Blankenstein
LEANDRO	Seth Daniel
THE SMILING STATUE.....	Eric Landgren
TARTAGLIA.....	Tim Sweeney
DERAMO	E.T. Hohlbein
CLARICE	Jennifer Roop
PANTALONE	Nathaniel Hodges
ANGELA	Anne Zaranek
CAPITANO SPAVENTO DAL VALDINFERNO.....	Andrew Pittman
CRIC	Mary Claire Dunn
CRAC.....	Pepper Howard
TWO MAGICAL SPRITES	Erin Huie, Leslie Rogers

King Stag

CAST

(In order of appearance.)

ARLECCHINO: Durandarte's assistant.

MAGICAL SPRITES (two)

DURANDARTE: the great and magnificent wizard.

BRIGHELLA: valet to the king.

SMERALDINA: Brighella's sister.

STATUE: smiles and laughs when others tell lies.

LEANDRO: Pantalone's son and head of the royal horse guard; in love with Clarice.

TARTAGLIA: prime minister of Serendippo and Clarice's father.

DERAMO: king of Serendippo.

CLARICE: Tartaglia's daughter.

PANTALONE: second minister of Serendippo and Leandro and Angela's father.

ANGELA: Pantalone's daughter.

CAPITANO SPAVENTO DAL VALDINFERNO: head of the Secret Service.

CRIC: Capitano's henchman.

CRAC: Capitano's other henchman.

SETTING

The scene is set in the remote kingdom of Serendippo: in its town square, in its royal palace and in the nearby forest of Roncislappe.

SPECIAL EFFECTS

Sudden transformations and scene changes can be easily accomplished using painted wings that can quickly substitute one for another: the town square, the privy chamber, the forest and the queen's chamber.

For the changes that transform characters, theatrical smoke devices and flashes of light to create distractions can do the trick.

Finally, for the last one, when Tartaglia as king becomes the old man and Deramo as the old man becomes king, one solution is double costuming one worn under the other.

PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

Arlecchino: ar-lay-KEE-noh

Durandarte: doo-rahn-DAR-tay

Brighella: bree-GAY-lah

Smeraldina: smer-ahl-DEE-nah

Leandro: lay-AND-roh

Tartaglia: tar-TA-yia

Deramo: DARE-am-oh

Clarice: clah-REE-chay

Pantalone: pan-tah-LOAN-ay

Angela: AN-jay-lah

Capitano Spavento dal Valdinferno: ca-pi-TA-noh spa-VEN-toh
dahl val-deen-FER-noh

Serendippo: sey-ren-DIP-poh

Roncislappe: roan-chee-SLAP-pay

Bergamo: BEAR-gah-moh

Torquato Tasso: tor-KWA-toh TAS-soh

Gazzetta Veneta: gahd-SAY-tah VEN-ay-tah

King Stag

ACT I

PROLOGUE

AT RISE: *At the outset, the stage is bare. As the house lights go down, a spot comes up on a side door of the auditorium, and ARLECCHINO emerges. He carries a large birdcage in one hand, a scribbled scrap of paper in the other hand and a great scroll of paper under that arm. He looks lost and confused. He approaches an audience member.*

ARLECCHINO. Uh, excuse me, but can you tell me, is this the *(Mentions the name of the theatre and then the name of the city. Looks around for confirmation from other audience members.)* It is? Well, then, this must be the place. *(Goes up the steps onto the forestage where he sets down his birdcage. Consults the scrap of paper in his hand.)* My master, the great and magnificent wizard Durandarte, told me to meet him right here. *(Says the name of the theatre again.)* It's a peculiar place to meet, I should think. I mean, why *(Says the name of the city again.)*, huh? And why a theatre? I mean he says he has important things to do. Well, important things don't happen in theatres. On top of that, all of you people are here. What would he want with all of you people? What do you want, for that matter? I hope you know what you're doing. This could get scary. I've been servant to the great and magnificent Durandarte for many years, and I rarely know what I'm doing, and I'm scared half the time. So, you better watch out. And another thing: he told me I had to bring along a large birdcage. This is it, you see? Now, what do you suppose he wants with a birdcage? I'd like to know that. *(Spreads the scroll of paper out on the floor, goes down on his hands and knees and starts examining the paper.)*

(The stage brightens as colored lights dance on the background.)

ARLECCHINO *(cont'd)*. Now, he says that we are going from here on to the kingdom of Serendippo. What I can't make out on this map here is where that kingdom is. Serendippo. What a name! Hmm, let's see ...

(The two MAGICAL SPRITES dance across the stage, creating a strange sound. ARLECCHINO looks up questioningly at the audience. DURANDARTE speaks in a rich, dark, disembodied voice from the depths of the stage.)

DURANDARTE *(offstage)*. Arlecchino!

ARLECCHINO. Yipe! That's him!

DURANDARTE *(offstage)*. Are you there?

ARLECCHINO. Yes, master, I am here.

DURANDARTE *(offstage)*. Do you have the birdcage I commanded you to bring?

ARLECCHINO. Yes, master, I have the birdcage. It's right here. See?

DURANDARTE *(offstage)*. Very good. Now, it is time. On the instant, I shall place you in the city of Serendippo. Are you ready?

ARLECCHINO. Well, I don't know ...

(The lights flash and the wings and drops come on instantly creating a false perspective vista of an exotic street scene. It has an Eastern, Moorish look about it. There are two prominent palaces, the downstage wings on each side. These represent the residences of TARTAGLIA and PANTALONE. Each has a doorway painted on it with a slit conveniently provided for persons to go in and out of the house.)

DURANDARTE *(offstage)*. Now, make quite sure that we are in the city of Serendippo. I shall join you shortly.

(DURANDARTE's voice trails off. The light becomes normal.)

ARLECCHINO *(has sat down smack on the floor in wonderment at this transformation)*. Wow! How about that? *(Gets up and starts wandering around the street.)* Hey, this is some town. I like it. I can see way off in the distance on this side, and way off in the distance on this other side. It's great. I wonder if it really is Serendippo. Old Durandarte doesn't usually make mistakes.

(He comes back downstage to his map, the scroll spread out on the ground. He again goes down on hands and knees to study it. As he is doing this, BRIGHELLA enters from one of the wings, turns and calls offstage.)

BRIGHELLA. Hey, Smeraldina! Smeraldina! Get yourself out here!

ARLECCHINO. Oooh! Somebody lives in this town!

BRIGHELLA. SMERALDINAAAA!

ARLECCHINO. Hey! Keep it down a little.

BRIGHELLA. Who are you? HEY, SMERAALDINAAA!

ARLECCHINO. I'm Arlecchino. Say, do you suppose you could help me out here? Look, this map is supposed to show me how to get to Serendippo. I can't find it anywhere.

BRIGHELLA. Who'd you say you were?

ARLECCHINO. Arlecchino.

BRIGHELLA. Arlecchino?

ARLECCHINO. Right. Arlecchino.

BRIGHELLA. Ah. Hey, SMERRAALDIINAAAA!

ARLECCHINO. Would you mind not shouting like that? I can't concentrate on this map when you do that.

BRIGHELLA. You got a map?

ARLECCHINO. Yes, I've got a map and I'm trying to find Serendippo on it.

BRIGHELLA. You want to find Serendippo?

ARLECCHINO. Right. Serendippo.

BRIGHELLA. Oh, well. I know Serendippo. Let me have that map. I'll show you Serendippo.

ARLECCHINO. Hey, thanks.

(BRIGHELLA joins ARLECCHINO downstage and also goes down on hands and knees to study it.)

BRIGHELLA. This is a peculiar map you've got. It seems to go in circles. Where's north? Which way's up?

ARLECCHINO *(turning it this way and that)*. Well, I think the sun comes up on this side of the map.

BRIGHELLA. So that ought to be east.

ARLECCHINO *(pointing out into the auditorium)*. Is that east?

BRIGHELLA. Well, you can always tell directions by the stars.

ARLECCHINO *(looking up into the flies)*. There aren't any stars.

BRIGHELLA. Right. So then, put your finger in your mouth.

ARLECCHINO. Put my finger in my mouth?

BRIGHELLA. Right.

ARLECCHINO *(sticks his index finger in his mouth)*. Mm wha moo ah moo?

BRIGHELLA. What did you say?

ARLECCHINO (*takes the finger out of his mouth*). Mm wha moo ah moo? (*Sticks his finger back in his mouth.*)

BRIGHELLA. Oh. "Now what do I do?" Right? Now, put your finger up in the air. That will tell which way the wind is blowing. It usually blows to the east, so then you'll know which way is east.

(*ARLECCHINO puts his other finger up in the air.*)

BRIGHELLA (*cont'd*). Your other finger.

ARLECCHINO. Ah. (*Tries it.*) There isn't any wind.

BRIGHELLA. It's as still as a tomb here.

ARLECCHINO. That's a bit spooky.

BRIGHELLA (*shaking it off*). What are you looking for on this map anyway?

ARLECCHINO. I'm looking for Serendippo.

BRIGHELLA. What for?

ARLECCHINO. I want to know if that's where I am.

BRIGHELLA. Why didn't you say so? I could have told you that.

ARLECCHINO. You could? Is it? Where I am, I mean?

BRIGHELLA. Yes, I could and yes, it is.

ARLECCHINO. Ah, well, that's a relief. I was afraid I'd never find it.

BRIGHELLA. You can put your map away then. (*Crosses back to the wing.*) Hey, Smeraldina!

ARLECCHINO (*rolling up the scroll and sticking it into his belt*). Who is this Smeraldina you keep calling for?

BRIGHELLA. She's my sister. She has gotten herself all gussied up for the big interview today. I want to see what she looks like. She'll have to go some to get the king's interest, I can tell you.

ARLECCHINO. What king? What interview?

BRIGHELLA. You don't know where you are and you don't have any idea what's going on, do you?

ARLECCHINO. Well, no. Give us the exposition.

BRIGHELLA. Up to now, Deramo, king of Serendippo, has interviewed two thousand, seven hundred and forty-eight women in his search for a queen and a mother for the next king of Serendippo. Today he is interviewing three more women and Smeraldina is one of them. OK?

ARLECCHINO. And she's your sister.

BRIGHELLA. Right.

ARLECCHINO. And who's her brother?

BRIGHELLA. I am.

ARLECCHINO. I know, but who are you?

BRIGHELLA. I'm Brighella, head valet to the king.

ARLECCHINO. The king is willing to consider the sister of his valet?

BRIGHELLA. Well, he's running out of choices.

ARLECCHINO. Ah!

SMERALDINA (*calling from offstage*). Here I come, ready or not.

BRIGHELLA. Stand back. This ought to be something!

(Both of them stand aside as SMERALDINA sweeps onstage wearing an outrageous, oriental, gaudy outfit with an elaborate head-dress. BRIGHELLA doubles over in laughter at the sight of her, while ARLECCHINO stands motionless, transfixed by the vision of beauty before his eyes as she parades back and forth modeling her dress for the two of them.)

BRIGHELLA (*cont'd*). Oh God, this is awful. You look like an overdone peddler woman about to scream, "Rose petals for sale! Dates, prunes and chestnuts specially prepared! Come and get 'em."

SMERALDINA. What are you talking about, brother? Dressed like this I could make the beasts of the forest fall in love with me, let alone a king.

BRIGHELLA. What a way to talk! You talk like that in front of the king and I'll guarantee you you'll inspire nothing but maybe a slap across the face.

SMERALDINA. Oh, I'll know how to talk, all right. I have been memorizing lines from all the great poets like Torquato Tasso. Just listen to this: "Love came upon him with such furious force / That he, once deemed wise, was crazy as a horse." How about that, huh?

ARLECCHINO. Oh, beautiful!

BRIGHELLA. What do you mean, beautiful? That's not how Tasso wrote it.

(ARLECCHINO lets out a deep sigh.)

SMERALDINA. Who is this man and what's the matter with him?

ARLECCHINO (*throwing himself at her feet*). I am Arlecchino and I am in love. Smeraldina, you are beauty, glory, dignity, charm all

rolled in one. I grovel at your feet. Let me take you away from all this. I have a map and I know the way out, through that door over there. Please have pity on a man filled with passion for you. It is you who has inspired me and you who must take responsibility for it.

SMERALDINA. What are you talking about? For heaven's sake, get up!

BRIGHELLA. I think it was you who said something about the beasts of the forest. Incidentally, I wouldn't trust that map or that door over there.

ARLECCHINO (*has thrown his arms around SMERALDINA's knees*).
Don't leave me!

SMERALDINA. Listen, you funny little man, I can't be bothered with the likes of you. I am on my way to be interviewed by the king. That interview will make me queen of Serendippo and wife of King Deramo and then mother of the next king of Serendippo, and Queen Mother, and so on. Now, let go of my knees.

ARLECCHINO. I can't let you go.

(At this moment, there is a flash of light and a clap of thunder. ARLECCHINO jumps to his feet. The great and magnificent DURANDARTE stands before them enormously impressive and larger than life in his bright green gowns. At the sight of him, BRIGHELLA sits smack on the floor and SMERALDINA swoons in ARLECCHINO's arms.)

DURANDARTE. Enough! Arlecchino!

ARLECCHINO. Yes, master. I am here.

DURANDARTE. Have you checked? Are we in Serendippo?

ARLECCHINO. Yes, master.

DURANDARTE. Very well, we have important work to do. Put that woman down and come here. Don't forget the birdcage.

ARLECCHINO. Yes, master. (*Does all those things.*)

DURANDARTE. I shall now transform this space into the privy chamber of King Deramo with whom we must now confer. Here, stand close by me.

(DURANDARTE spreads his arms. SMERALDINA jumps to her feet, runs to BRIGHELLA and the two of them stand to one side. DURANDARTE then utters a strange parrot-like squawk. The light flashes and the street scene transforms into the royal privy chamber.)

SCENE 1: THE ROYAL PRIVY CHAMBER

(The scene now represents the inner sanctum of the palace of King DERAMO. It seems to have dark corners and recesses, and it is ornately decorated even if the space itself is relatively bare. There is a STATUE of an armored man in a niche toward the back of the scene.)

As the lights become normal, we see the same four characters who had been together in the street. As soon as BRIGHELLA recognizes where they are, he takes his sister by the hand and rushes offstage, leaving DURANDARTE and ARLECCHINO alone onstage. ARLECCHINO puts the birdcage down and begins to move about the room. As soon as he does so, LEANDRO rushes in. He is dressed as a soldier of the king, for he is the captain of the horse guard. He draws his sword.)

LEANDRO. Aha! No one is allowed in this chamber except with the king's express permission. You are both under arrest. I do not know who those people are who just rushed from the room, but I shall find out. You two, meanwhile, are destined for the dungeon.

DURANDARTE. Pishtosh!

LEANDRO. What's that you say? *(Attempts to size up DURANDARTE and loses some of his authority.)* Who are you? *(Turns to ARLECCHINO.)* Speak! Give me your name.

ARLECCHINO. My name is Arlecchino and this is my master, the great and magnificent Durandarte.

DURANDARTE. I have been summoned here by your king, Deramo. Go and tell him that I have arrived, my good man.

LEANDRO. You? You ... are the great Durandarte?

ARLECCHINO. He's the man!

LEANDRO. Forgive me. I did not realize, oh great Durandarte. The king has been expecting you. He is very anxious to confer with you. Please, just stay there. I'll bring the king at once. Now, don't leave. Please!

(LEANDRO rushes out. In his absence, DURANDARTE wanders about the room. He comes to a stop looking up at the STATUE.)

ARLECCHINO. Master, do you mind telling me why I have been hauling this birdcage around for so long? What do you want with it?

DURANDARTE. All in good time. All in good time.

ARLECCHINO (*sets the birdcage down, sits on it and twiddles his thumbs. After a moment, he looks about the room*). Master, I have the feeling that we've been here before. Is that right? Have we been here?

DURANDARTE. Yes. Some years ago, I put a charm on this statue.

ARLECCHINO (*rises and joins DURANDARTE at the base of the STATUE*). Yes, I do remember. The charm seems to have worn off, doesn't it?

DURANDARTE. Not necessarily. Let's put him to the test.

(DURANDARTE snaps his fingers at the STATUE, which begins to stir. Finally, the STATUE turns his head and looks right at the two at the base of his pedestal.)

STATUE. Thanks. I needed that. I've been standing here stock still for I don't know how long. Do you have any idea how stiff you can get standing in one position for five or six years? Here, lend me a hand, will you?

(ARLECCHINO helps the STATUE down off his pedestal despite the great weight of the STATUE. The STATUE stretches and yawns.)

DURANDARTE. Had any good laughs lately?

STATUE. No, that's just it. Not only have I had to stand stock still all these years, I haven't so much as cracked a smile. It used to be that there would be someone in here every day, sometimes more than one person, who would get me smiling all the way through the interview. I don't know if you know this or not, but King Deramo has interviewed two thousand, seven hundred and forty-eight candidates for queen. He had me smiling at every one of them, sometimes laughing outright. But then it all stopped. Somehow, he turned me off. I have no reaction at all nowadays, even when people come in here and tell the biggest lies you can imagine. And yet nothing out of me, just like I had been turned to stone. I can't figure out what happened. Of course, there haven't been any more candidates for a long time. Still, there have been some really fat lies said in this very room, ones that I really wanted to laugh at. I just couldn't. Listen, I'm sorry if I run off at the mouth. It's been so long since I've had anyone to talk to. *(Does a few calisthenics.)*

DURANDARTE. I understand. You are perfectly right. King Deramo turned you off.

STATUE. He could do that?

DURANDARTE. Certainly. I showed him how before I left.

STATUE. That's too bad. It was a lot more fun when I was turned on. Hey, little fellow, could you rub my back a little? Right there between the shoulder blades.

(ARLECCHINO obliges him.)

DURANDARTE. Do you have any idea why he wants to see me now?

STATUE. Well, yes I do. He's going to be interviewing some more candidates. In fact, there will be three of them today. I suspect he'd like to have me restarted so that my smiles will let him know when they are less than truthful. What's more, his prime minister, Tartaglia, has him pretty well convinced that there are subversive elements in the kingdom and I suppose you might be helpful in ferreting them out. That's my guess anyway.

DURANDARTE. I expect you are right.

ARLECCHINO. I hear someone coming. You'd better get back on that pedestal.

STATUE. Oh, what a bother!

ARLECCHINO. Hurry. Here, I'll help. Put your foot here in my hands and I'll give you a leg up.

(ARLECCHINO's hand is stuck under the STATUE's foot when TARTAGLIA and DERAMO enter the chamber. DURANDARTE quickly waves his arms in front of the STATUE's face and it instantly refreezes itself. KING DERAMO is a young man with an open countenance, elegantly dressed in his royal robes. TARTAGLIA, on the other hand, is dark and furtive in appearance. ARLECCHINO frees his hand and places himself in front of the STATUE to block it from TARTAGLIA's view.)

TARTAGLIA. Good morning, gentlemen. I assume that you are the mag and gratificent ... the mate and gragnificent ... the great and magnificent Durandarte. Is that so?

ARLECCHINO. Yes, that is so. This is the great and magnificent Durandarte. And I am his humble and obedient assistant, Arlecchino, always ready to assist at a moment's notice. His magic is highly sophisticated and it takes an alert, intelligent, talented mind to work with him. It is my especial honor to fulfill that ...

DURANDARTE. Arlecchino!

ARLECCHINO. Yes, master?

DURANDARTE. Be quiet.

ARLECCHINO. Yes, master. I only wanted to be sure that these people recognized ...

DURANDARTE. Arlecchino!

(ARLECCHINO slaps his hand over his mouth, but continues to mumble inside it.)

TARTAGLIA. May I present to you, His Majesty, King Deramo of Serendippo. Your majesty, the mate and gradificent Durandarte.

(TARTAGLIA steps grandly aside to allow the two gentlemen to speak. Meanwhile, TARTAGLIA approaches ARLECCHINO, eyeing him suspiciously.)

DURANDARTE *(bowing)*. Your majesty.

DERAMO. Thank you for responding to my summons. I have sent many people out into the world to seek you, and for a long time I despaired of ever finding you again.

DURANDARTE. I am sorry for any inconvenience this may have given your majesty. I do move often in uncharted territories. I am, however, now completely at your disposal and I beg to know how I may serve you.

DERAMO. You do me great honor.

(TARTAGLIA, meanwhile, has been jockeying with ARLECCHINO and has discovered the STATUE standing on the floor.)

TARTAGLIA. How, I would like to know, did this statue end up on the floor? How did it pet off its getestal ... get off its pedestal ... climb out of its niche and fand on the stoor ... stand on the floor? Someone has been in this room, someone with intarious nefentions ... nefarious intentions.

ARLECCHINO. Now, now, don't be alarmed, sir. I mean sometimes statues have this ability to awaken themselves and step down. It doesn't mean anything. I mean, think of it: suppose you were a statue ...

DURANDARTE. Arlecchino!

(ARLECCHINO, again, slaps his hand over his mouth.)

TARTAGLIA. No, I tell you, there are people in this kingdom who are engaged in skeempiratorial cones ... conspiratorial schemes ... to usurp the throne. We have to be ever vigilant. No one should be in this room. No one. It is the king's privy chamber.