

Servant of Two Masters

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Final Version for Oregon Shakespeare Festival

Act I

VENICE SQUARE - DAY

SYLVIO, the young lover, kneels facing his beloved CLARICE. Behind Sylvio is his father DOTTORE. Clarice is flanked by her father PANTALONE and her faithful servant SMERALDINA.

SYLVIO
Here is my hand...

Sylvio slowly reaches toward Clarice.

SYLVIO (cont'd)
And with it my whole-

TRUFFALDINO (O.S.)
Cut!

Everyone drops their pose and their expressions immediately turn from excited anticipation to frustration.

SYLVIO
COME ON! This is outrageous!

DOTTORE
I am inclined to agree.

SYLVIO
You think I'm going to stand for this?

DOTTORE
We've been working this opening moment for 8.12 weeks.

PANTALONE
I don't think I'm being paid to watch this ship sink.

SYLVIO
I haven't even worked my big monologue yet.

PANTALONE
If you can call the pennies I receive payment.

DOTTORE
Surely he understands the need to rehearse.

CLARICE
I sing a song in this play.

DOTTORE
Well it's not going to be very good unless we rehearse.

CLARICE
I like to sing!

FLORINDO and BEATRICE enter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BEATRICE

For those of us that are not in this opening scene I feel we are being denied the opportunity to express our voice.

FLORINDO

And what a lovely voice it is that I have.

BEATRICE

Of course as a woman in the theatre I am constantly being denied my artistic expression.

FLORINDO

And I am very good looking. Shouldn't the people have an opportunity to see that?

DOTTORE

The unprofessionalism displayed here is unprecedented.

PANTALONE

From the meager wages-

SYLVIO

-To the over-complicated direction.

DOTTORE

I was the lead in a production of Hamlet, perhaps one of the most complicated plays ever written, and that direction wasn't nearly this Byzantine.

TRUFFALDINO enters. He is holding a can of soda. He shakes it in frustration.

TRUFFALDINO

That's because THIS... Is a comedy!

He opens the soda and, surprisingly, it doesn't explode.

TRUFFALDINO (cont'd)

And as a comedy, it requires much more meticulousness than your precious Hamlet. Your brooding won't work here, Dottore.

DOTTORE

You needn't call me by my character's name-

TRUFFALDINO

You're on the stage! You're nothing if not in character!

Beat.

SYLVIO

(Discreetly to Dottore)

I saw you in that production of Hamlet. You weren't the lead, you played Polonius.

DOTTORE

Those of us who pride ourselves on our knowledge of Shakespeare know that Hamlet is really about Polonius.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRUFFALDINO

We are doing a comedy people. Nothing is more important than that. Especially in times like these!

CLARICE

Times like these?

Everyone stares at Clarice, a little stunned at her ignorance.

PANTALONE

My dear girl, surely you know we are in a great recession.

CLARICE

(Covering, unsure)

I... knew it was a good one.

PANTALONE

It is a great one! Joblessness is up, the stock market is down!

FLORINDO

The stock market? That only affects Wall Street, not Main Street.

PANTALONE

But it has affected Main Street! And climbed its way up Theatre Row into the heart of this very modest repertory theatre company, can't you see that?

CLARICE

I can see Russia from my house.

PANTALONE

Forget about Russia! We've got problems right here!

DOTTORE

He's right! The budget for our show has been reduced by 47 percent.

SYLVIO

It's an outrage!

DOTTORE

We can't afford to build all the new props and costumes we need-

SYLVIO

I am outraged!

DOTTORE

We've been forced to share or reuse props and costumes from the other shows or past productions.

SYLVIO

My rage is out!

CLARICE

I think you're making much ado about nothing.

PANTALONE

I don't think we are!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLARICE

Then why does it say so on your jacket?

Sure enough, on Pantalone's jacket it says MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING CAST AND CREW.

DOTTORE

That's the point, dear girl. Why, my big book of knowledge is also the suitcase from Music Man.

He pulls out a handle from the book and turns it around revealing the words PROFESSOR HAROLD HILL.

PANTALONE

And my cane is the lance in Don Quixote.

He extends the cane to reveal it is also a lance.

FLORINDO

And I think my sack of decapitated heads is also being used in Henry VIII.

He pulls out a decapitated head from the sack he is holding.

BEATRICE

It is only being used in Henry VIII.

PANTALONE

And what's worse, they've cut salaries! I am getting paid half what I used to make!

BEATRICE

You're making fifty cents on the dollar? Welcome to my world!

PANTALONE

And no one has even mentioned the problems with the electricity.

CLARICE

What problems with the electricity?

The lights go out.

CLARICE (cont'd)

Oh, those problems with the electricity.

PANTALONE

In an effort to save money on the electric bill, they are randomly turning the power off in the whole theater. I tell you, these are scary times. I can't think of anything more frightening.

The lights turn back on. Brighella, a sweet old woman in chef's attire, stands center stage.

BRIGHELLA

Hello.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EVERYONE BUT BRIGHELLA
 (Cowering in fear)
 Brighella!

Beat.

TRUFFALDINO
 (To everyone but Brighella)
 I'll handle this.

Truffaldino cautiously steps forward.

TRUFFALDINO (cont'd)
 (Tentatively)
 Brighella...

DOTTORE
 (To Truffaldino)
 Careful...

TRUFFALDINO
 (Tentatively)
 We are so sorry...

FLORINDO
 Easy...

TRUFFALDINO
 (Tentatively)
 We know you're probably waiting to rehearse your scene...

SYLVIO
 (To Truffaldino)
 Not so close...

TRUFFALDINO
 (Tentatively)
 We are unfortunately still working on the opening moment.

CLARICE
 (To Truffaldino)
 She'll kill you!

TRUFFALDINO
 We are so grateful for your patience and absolutely apologize
 for any inconvenience this has caused you.

BRIGHELLA
 (Beat. Then, sweetly)
 Okey-dokey.

Brighella exits. Everyone breathes a
 sigh of relief.

TRUFFALDINO
 That was a close one.
 (Then)
 Alright everyone, let's take it from the top.

SYLVIO
 But we've hardly even touched the rest of the play.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PANTALONE
As if that matters. People can't afford to buy groceries,
you think we're actually going to have people in the seats?

Everyone looks outward to the audience
to notice for the first time that the
seats are indeed filled with people.

PANTALONE (cont'd)
There are people in the seats.

FLORINDO
I haven't even put my make-up on.

TRUFFALDINO
(Calling out)
House Manager! Come here please!

TRUFFALDINO (cont'd)
(Then, to the others)
I told him not to open the house until we've gotten this
opening moment just right. Why he couldn't understand these
simple directions-

DOTTORE
Maybe he doesn't take directions from someone who is not the
director.

TRUFFALDINO
The director of this play as you may recall abandoned us,
left town with some actor.

CLARICE
The porter.

TRUFFALDINO
The actor playing the porter.

PANTALONE
The director and the porter were fired due to budget cuts.

DOTTORE
The least important jobs are always the first to go.

TRUFFALDINO
In any case, someone had to take charge.

BEATRICE
And like most men you felt it should be you?

TRUFFALDINO
The show is called the Servant of Two Masters. Who do you
play?

BEATRICE
Beatrice.

TRUFFALDINO
I play the servant of two masters. I think that puts me in
charge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOTTORE

One could argue that we're all servants to two masters. Servants to the things we want and servants to the things that keep us from getting the things we want.

They all pause to consider this. Then-

BEATRICE

Yeah, so I should direct!

DOTTORE

I should direct!

FLORINDO

I should be on TV.

SMERALDINA

Be quiet all of you!!!

Everyone turns to see Smeraldina who had been patiently sitting this argument out. Until now.

SMERALDINA (cont'd)

What is the matter with you people? You're fighting over who should direct? There are people in the audience! The director's job is done! It's time to tell our story.

PANTALONE

How do you tell a story without lights that work properly, props and costumes to call our own, a director to direct the action and an actor to play the porter? So many problems, where do we even begin?

SMERALDINA

We begin at the beginning. Focus on the opening moment and the rest of the play will take care of itself.

TRUFFALDINO

This is what I've been trying to tell you people.

SMERALDINA

The show must go on! All of you back stage! Now!!!

The cast all files backstage.

SMERALDINA (cont'd)

(Calling back to them)

Check your costumes! Take a moment! Take a breath and let us begin...

She turns to the audience.

SMERALDINA (cont'd)

Ladies and Gentlemen, The Servant of Two-

BOB enters. He is very large but easily frightened.

BOB

Excuse me?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SMERALDINA
(Impatiently)

WHAT?

BOB
(Cowering)
Cookies and cream! You really scared me just now. When you said "What!"

SMERALDINA
What do you want?

BOB
(Waving a contract)
I'm the new Giovanni.

SMERALDINA
Who?

BOB
The porter. Giovanni. Your director, Truffaldino, hired me.

SMERALDINA
Oh. The new Porter. Excellent! Go back stage with the others, we're about to begin. Go!

Bob nods and heads back stage.

SMERALDINA (cont'd)
We now bring you The Servant of Two-

JIM enters. He is considerably smaller but with a very tough exterior.

JIM
Excuse me?

SMERALDINA
WHAT?

JIM
I'm your new Giovanni. Truffaldino hired me.

SMERALDINA
(To Jim)
What?

JIM
Am I not speaking English?

SMERALDINA
I already have a new Giovanni; I don't need a second.

Bob re-enters.

BOB
Is it supposed to be that dark back stage? I'm afraid of the dark.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SMERALDINA
There's glow tape on the floor.

BOB
I'm afraid of glow tape, too.

JIM
(Pulling out his contract)
I have a contract that says I'm your new Giovanni.

BOB
(Pulling out his contract)
I'm the new Giovanni.

Jim throws Bob a ferocious look.

BOB (cont'd)
When you look at me like that it scares me.

JIM
I will destroy anybody that tries to tell me they're the new Giovanni.

STEVE enters. He is normal size but his brain is quite large.

STEVE
(waving a contract)
Hello. I'm the new Giovanni.

SMERALDINA
Cheese and crackers!

STEVE
Although historically the porter was played by an adolescent male, Truffaldino nevertheless thought I'd be good for the part. Who do you play?

SMERALDINA
Smeraldina.

STEVE
The lady servant who wants nothing more than to find a man.

SMERALDINA
I've already found two, thank you.
(Then)
Here's the deal: we accidentally cast three people for one role, so I'm afraid I have to ask two of you to leave.

JIM
I ain't leaving! I got people in the audience tonight.

STEVE
I have people in the audience, as well.

BOB
I'm afraid of people!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SMERALDINA

We have one role and three actors. If someone can think of a solution that's fair and simple then let's hear it and start this darn show!

STEVE

We can alternate entrances. As I recall from the script, the number of times the Porter enters onto the stage is divisible by three. I propose we all take turns playing the one role but simply alternating who enters. I'd suggest alternating scenes but the number of scenes the Porter is in is a prime number which as we all know is not divisible by anything but itself and one. Alternating entrances, however, mathematically works in our favor and is equitable by all.

SMERALDINA

(Beat. Then)

That's good enough for me.

SMERALDINA (cont'd)

We now present-

ALL

The Servant Of Two Masters!

They all exit. Blackout.

VENICE SQUARE - MOMENTS LATER

In the center of the square SYLVIO, the young lover, kneels facing his beloved CLARICE. Behind Sylvio is his father DOTTORE. Clarice is flanked by her father PANTALONE and her faithful servant SMERALDINA.

SYLVIO

Here is my hand...

Sylvio slowly reaches toward Clarice.

SYLVIO (cont'd)

And with it my whole- COME ON!!! This is outrageous!!!

Everyone looks at Sylvio, confused.

SYLVIO (cont'd)

Sorry, force of habit.

(Then resuming)

Here is my hand. And with it my whole heart.

CLARICE

Here is my hand. And with it my whole heart.

SYLVIO

I shall take your heart and place it in my chest next to my own.

CLARICE

Oh Sylvio, you don't have a heart.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SYLVIO

I beg your pardon.

CLARICE

You gave it to me, remember?

SYLVIO

(Humoring her)

Yes, well I have your heart now.

CLARICE

(Crossing her fingers)

I hope.

SYLVIO

I'm sorry?

CLARICE

When you gave me your heart I put it in my chest next to mine and then I took mine out and gave it to you. But what if it wasn't my heart I took out? What if I simply re-grabbed yours? Then you'd have your heart and I'd have mine and then...

(Dramatically)

We'll never be together.

PANTALONE

Nonsense girl, simply take his hand and you shall be betrothed.

SMERALDINA

(Aside)

If only it were that simple.

DOTTORE

Pantalone is right. The joining of two hands is all that is required.

SMERALDINA

(To a man in the audience)

Can you imagine, we join hands and then suddenly we're engaged.

PANTALONE

And thus with the coupling of two hands, is the joining of two families.

SMERALDINA

(Putting out her hand to shake)

By the way, my name is Smeraldina, how do you do?

DOTTORE

Of course, witnesses are necessary.

PANTALONE

(To Dottore)

Perhaps we are in need of some witnesses.

DOTTORE

As they say in Latin: Zippity mach a doo zippity mach a dah.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PANTALONE
That doesn't sound like Latin.

DOTTORE
(Translating)
Witnesses are needed to validate the veracity of a betrothal.

CLARICE
My dear servant, Smeraldina, can be witness to our love.

SMERALDINA
If I can't find a love of my own, then witnessing someone else's love is surely the next best thing.

DOTTORE
(To Clarice)
Alas dear girl, I said Zippity, not Zippito. Witnesses. Plural.

CLARICE
Of course. Zippity.

SYLVIO
I won't be told I can't be with the woman I love because we're short one witness!

DOTTORE
Never fear. I'm certain we can find one additional person to certify this engagement.

Enter Brighella.

BRIGHELLA
Perhaps I can be of some assistance.

EVERYONE BUT BRIGHELLA
(Cowering in fear)
Brighella!

BRIGHELLA
If it is simply an extra pair of eyes you need, I'm certain I have a pair you can use.

SYLVIO
(Sottovoce to the others)
There's probably a pair in her pocket.

CLARICE
(In meter, to the others)
Do you think she's done the things they've said?

DOTTORE
(In meter, to the others)
I think she's done much worse, I fear.

PANTALONE
(In meter, to the others)
Let's not let her know we know.

BRIGHELLA
(Also in meter, to the others)
I can hear you over here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They all laugh awkwardly in a poor attempt to cover.

PANTALONE

We wouldn't want to put you out, Brighella.

DOTTORE

We're sure you're very busy.

BRIGHELLA

Not at all. You need an audience, I can be just that. Provided I can sit.

Everyone suddenly offers a chair to Brighella.

BRIGHELLA (cont'd)

Thank you. My feet, you understand, they're quite sore. I've been cooking all day. A lamb. Quite good.

(Then)

In any case, witnessing the poetry and romance of young love re-ignites my own... fiery passion.

(To Sylvio and Clarice)

Please continue.

Beat. Re-igniting Brighella's fiery passion is clearly not something Sylvio or Clarice have any interest in doing.

SYLVIO

(To Clarice)

Here is my hand.

CLARICE

(To Sylvio)

And here is mine.

SYLVIO

Let's shake.

CLARICE

I agree.

They shake hands.

DOTTORE

It is done! You are betrothed!

PANTALONE

Thank you for your time, Brighella. Good day.

BRIGHELLA

That didn't seem very romantic.

DOTTORE

Nevertheless, the engagement has been authenticated.

BRIGHELLA

Not very celebratory either.

PANTALONE

We like to do things simple. Nothing too extravagant.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRIGHELLA

I would have thought the engagement would be accompanied by a nice feast.

DOTTORE

A nice feast would be nice.

PANTALONE

I had planned on offering a light repast.

BRIGHELLA

Perhaps for the reception then. I would be happy to serve you for dinner.

PANTALONE

(Aside)
Serve us with a side of potatoes...

SYLVIO

(Aside)
She's psychotic to be sure.

CLARICE

(Out loud to everyone)
I wonder if she plans on killing us.

Everyone stares at Clarice.

CLARICE (cont'd)

Sorry. That was supposed to be an aside.

BRIGHELLA

(Moving on)
As you know, I own the Inn just over there. I would gladly prepare a glorious meal in honor of the betrothed.

DOTTORE

(Excited)
A glorious meal. That sounds glorious!

PANTALONE

That sounds a little too rich for our tastes.

BRIGHELLA

It would be my gift. Free of charge.

PANTALONE

On the other hand, nothing is too good for my daughter.

BRIGHELLA

I don't mean to brag, but I am quite the chef.

PANTALONE

Then it's settled. We shall commission you to prepare us a glorious feast for the wedding reception, free of charge.

BRIGHELLA

And now, a toast is in order.

PANTALONE

I thank you, Brighella. And I'd like to apologize for being frightened by you earlier.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BRIGHELLA
Niente. I get that all the time.
(Calling off stage)
Giovanni!

JIM (O.S.)
(Frightened)

BRIGHELLA!

BRIGHELLA
(To Pantalone)
See?

JIM enters nervously.

JIM
You called for me?

BRIGHELLA
Bring us some champagne and some glasses that we might have a
toast.

JIM
Just don't hurt me.

BRIGHELLA
(Sweetly)
Okey-dokey.

Jim exits. Just as he leaves the
stage:

BRIGHELLA (cont'd)
(Calling after him)
Oh, and Giovanni!

BOB enters.

BOB
Yes?

Everyone is confused at the new face.

BRIGHELLA
(More confused than anyone)
Uhhh... don't bring the cheap stuff. Perhaps the Cristal.

BOB
Of course. It would be my absolute pleasure.

Bob exits.

DOTTORE
Well Pantalone, all the chips seem to be falling into place.
Our children are in love. The engagement is set. This
marriage has surely been destined by heaven.

PANTALONE
True enough, Dottore. As you know my daughter Clarice had
been engaged to Federigo Rasponi of Turin... until his
unfortunate death.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOTTORE

And how did this Rasponi come to expire?

PANTALONE

They found him stabbed 17 times in the chest.

DOTTORE

Sounds like suicide.

PANTALONE

Murder, I think. In any case, had he not died Clarice would be married to him now and couldn't belong to my new son in law, Sylvio.

SYLVIO

A lucky turn of events for me.

CLARICE

I would have married that man from Turin only to obey my father, but my heart has always been yours.

DOTTORE

And thus, it can be said things always work out for the best for everyone.

BRIGHELLA

Not for Rasponi.

DOTTORE

Well, no, not for Rasponi. The exception always proves the rule.

BRIGHELLA

I was in Turin for three years. I knew him quite well. And his sister Beatrice. A lovely girl. He was quite protective of her. Pity about his death.

PANTALONE

(Aside)

Pity indeed, my financial arrangements with him were substantially better.

SYLVIO

(Aside)

She says pity, I say thank you.

CLARICE

(Out loud to everyone)

I wonder if it was Brighella that killed Rasponi.

Everyone looks at her.

CLARICE (cont'd)

Sorry. That was supposed to be an aside.