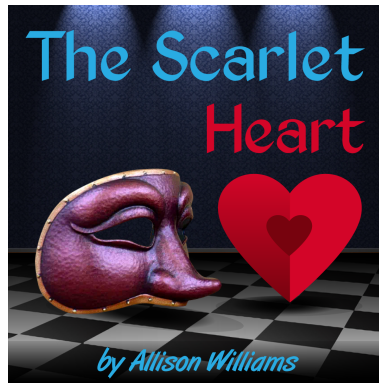




Sample Pages from The Scarlet Heart

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THE SCARLET HEART

A COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE COMEDY BY
Allison Williams



The Scarlet Heart

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Characters

All “masked” characters may be played by male or female actors with or without masks, though the characters should be played as their indicated gender. If you choose not to use masks, stylized makeup and/or facial hair can be very helpful.

It's possible to make both Brighella and Pulcinella female characters played by women, in which case Brighella's disguise is a male servant. Stupino can also be a female character played by a woman, in which case she's Stupina, disguises herself as a male servant, and falls in love with a “male” ladle.

BRIGHELLALeader of the thieves, male character, masked.

ARLECCHINOA trickster and thief, male character, masked.

STUPINOA very dumb thief, male character, masked.
Treats objects as though they are people.

PANTALONEA rich old miser, male character, masked.

CAPITANOA braggart soldier, male character, masked. He frequently swings from bravery to cowardice and back again.

PULCINELLAThe oafish and put-upon owner of the Hotel Amatta, male character, masked.

FLAVIOVain, insecure, in love with being in love (and with Flaminia.) Male character, unmasked, carries an elaborate lacy hankie.

FLAMINIAVain, very secure, in love with being in love (and with Flavio.) Female character, unmasked, carries a mirror and lipstick.

COLUMBINAA trickster and servant, female character, masked or unmasked, carries a feather duster.

FRANCESCAA cynical maid and friend to Columbina, female character, masked or unmasked, carries a different feather duster.

FLAVIO must be male. FLAMINIA, COLUMBINA, and FRANCESCA must be female. The unmasked characters (FLAVIO, FLAMINIA, and possibly COLUMBINA and FRANCESCA) each have a prop that they use to show their characters in the same way that masks help the masked characters. They should work with these props from the first rehearsal to play with and explore all the things that can be done with them!

The Set

A flexible group of set pieces will suggest all of the necessary settings. The main pieces you'll need are two working doors (one of which should be movable), a nook with a statue in it that can rotate to become a "refrigerator," and a table that doubles as a bed. Think strong and portable when designing your pieces!

Here are the locations in the play:

Hotel Amatta Lobby: A table with a phone, a nook with a statue in it, and a potted plant.

Hotel Amatta Kitchen: The nook is rotated to reveal a "refrigerator." The table is used as the kitchen table.

Two Hotel Rooms: A single room serves as two different hotel rooms – A bed, a table with a bouquet, phone, and picture on it. The change in rooms can be indicated by rotating the picture and bouquet and/or changing the colour of the bedding.

Outside the Hotel Amatta: A door is brought down centre.

The look of the doors can be changed by hanging signs on them. When we're in the lobby, for example, the door should read "Hotel Amatta" backwards, as if it's being viewed through a glass door. It should read "Hotel Amatta" forwards when we're outside the hotel, etc.

See the appendix for a suggested set plot.

Time

It doesn't matter which time you pick as long as you have fun with it. The play has been written with the 1930's and a very bright, Southern Italian color scheme in mind.

You could stage this in traditional *commedia dell'arte* costume of the 15th or 16th century, Harlequin-esque costume of the 17th or 18th century, 1930's *Guys and Dolls* attire, or modern dress.

If you go with an earlier time period, you can either ignore anachronisms like the phone and newspaper, substitute in a messenger/herald/carrier pigeon, or put in a line like "Yeah, it's a phone, suspend your disbelief."

HOW TO DO THE PLAY

The Scarlet Heart may be played in three ways:

Scripted

You can rehearse and perform this play exactly as written. Direct it as you would direct any farce or comedy, and feel free to make cuts or minor changes for length or appropriateness.

Scenario

1. Spend some time exploring the commedia characters. Using the character descriptions and your own research for guidance, play with the characters to discover their bodies and voices.
2. If you're using masks, work with the masks to learn focus, head-takes, and how to use your body and your mask together to create a unified character. If you aren't using masks, still work on the characters, focusing on the face and head-takes. This work will help create the broad commedia style even without masks.
3. Play some improv games in character to get a sense of how the characters interact with each other. Focus on playing status and drive.
4. Learn about lazzi and how they show character, feed the plot, and kill time. Have each actor practice at least one character lazzi (based on the lazzi in the scenario pages) that they will be able to "plug in" to the play at a spontaneous or predetermined moment. If your actors are very adventurous, they can also make up their own lazzi based on their characters.
5. Using the scenario pages as your plot, improvise the show in character, scene by scene. See if new lazzi happen in the moment, either because something funny happens or because there's a technical hitch or a missed entrance that needs to be covered up! Tack up the scenario pages offstage in several locations, so everyone can refer to exactly what needs to happen in a scene before they enter. **Any acrobatics, fighting, and running around, will need to be specifically rehearsed so that no-one gets hurt.** As the scenes get more comfortable, start stringing them together until you can improvise the whole show without stopping.
6. Keep a notebook, either individually or as a group. For each improvisational rehearsal of the show or a scene, note what went well enough to integrate into the show. It doesn't have to be exactly the same, but if there was a good joke, a new lazzi that was fun to play, or a great character moment, see if you can let that happen again without forcing it. Most of what we know about *commedia dell'arte* comes from actors' notebooks that were passed down through

theatrical families. The actors wrote down good lazzi and ways to play their characters, so that they could remember and repeat things that worked.

7. When you've rehearsed this way a number of times, the show will start to come together in a way that feels natural and comfortable. If there are places that aren't working, go back to the drives, the status, or the traditional character descriptions and see if those techniques help. Don't be afraid to ask your actors to help each other – part of the commedia tradition was that the older and more experienced actors helped and coached the younger and newer members of the troupe. You can also use lines or whole sections from the script to fill in any areas where improvisation just isn't working out, or where you need to get out plot information to move the story forward, or where the written lines serve the play better than the other choices at hand.
8. It's up to you how much you "set" the lines and actions in rehearsal, and how much you choose to improvise when actually in front of the audience. Some casts enjoy creating the show and then setting it, others take on the (big) challenge of rehearsing together and then continuing to improvise and have new things happen each night. A created show gives you lots of freedom while letting you be tight, rehearsed and consistently funny; an improvised show is very hard to pull off but incredibly rewarding when you do. Be warned that if you go with improvisation, you have to be willing to risk being not funny, and you will want to practice bailing each other out in scenes that get stuck, perhaps even with a code word (perhaps the actors ring a cowbell?) that becomes a running joke for "Well, this isn't going well, I'm out of here! Next scene!" This is again a place where more experienced actors can help less-experienced actors by staying in the wings, recognizing when someone needs help, and coming onstage to bail them out with a message, letter, or plot point.

Combination

Use the script as a jumping-off place for the actors' creative work. When you really enjoy playing a scripted scene, use it as is. When a neat lazzi or a spontaneous one-liner happens in rehearsal that isn't in the script, use that, too. Throw in jokes and references specific to your audience (local humor is very much a part of commedia style), and highlight the talents of your actors by having them include skills such as singing, acrobatics, juggling, or whatever they do best.

As written, the script should run about 25 minutes, but depending on how your lazzi go and what extra things you throw in, it could run 45-60 minutes. If you find your version approaching 90 minutes, start looking for cuts – no matter how much you add, keep it tight and snappy, and leave your audience wanting more.

Whichever method you choose, you must include the following program note on authorship:

Commedia dell'arte is a form of theatre from 14th century Italy that spread throughout Europe. It was the first place for female actors and professional theatre troupes. The style features broad comedy, simple situations, and stereotypical characters with clear needs who are willing to do anything to get what they want. The plays were presented in public marketplaces, at festivals, and in theatres by troupes of actors who worked together their whole lives, and were comfortable improvising with each other as well as presenting rehearsed scenes. The *commedia* style can still be seen today in shows like *That 70's Show*, *The Simpsons*, and Bugs Bunny cartoons.

THE SCARLET HEART is a script/scenario by Allison Williams, but the play is intended to be presented with embellishments and improvisations by the actors, based on their understanding of their characters' drives and the situation.

Our performance tonight uses the script with additional material created by the actors.

OR

Our performance tonight was created by the actors from a scenario that describes what happens in each scene.

OR

Our performance tonight is improvised by the actors from a scenario that describes what happens in each scene.

Whatever method you choose, you must pay your royalties, because first and foremost, *commedia dell'arte* was professional.

More Information

Check out the appendix at the end of the book for vocabulary, word pronunciations, alternate lazzi and more about *commedia*.

Author's Note

I first encountered *commedia dell'arte* while working with my partner, Todd Espeland, who had trained with Carlo Mazzone-Clemente at the Dell'Arte School of Physical Theatre in Blue Lake, California. Carlo, Nobel-Prize-winning playwright Dario Fo, director Franca Rame, physical theatre teacher Jacques Lecoq and sculptor/mask-maker Amleto Satori were an instrumental part of the Italian *commedia* revival after World War II. Carlo, working with Hovey Burgess, brought *commedia* to North America in the late 1950's, and Carlo and his wife Jane Hill founded the Dell'Arte School, so that is, at least peripherally, my lineage.

Why lineage? Because *commedia* cannot, in the end, be learned from a book, but only from your teachers, your teachers' teachers, and your teachers' teachers' teachers. *Commedia* is *passed down and absorbed*, rather than learned.

And if you have no formal teachers? Why, then, like me, you learn it from your audience, by trying out a new *lazzi* and seeing if they laugh, or shrug, or walk away. You learn it from your own students, who find new aspects of old characters and masks; and you learn it from your fellow actors, by sharing, giving, and receiving feedback, ideas, and material. Because *commedia* is above all, collaborative.

Grazie mille to my faithful readers at Jenison High School, my slightly-puzzled-but-game readers at Traverse City West High School, and the Onset Gang – when it rains, we write.

Now go play!

Allison Williams
Crystal Beach, ON 2010

For J.D. – Writing buddy and dear friend

Scene One: The Thieves' Lair

A pool of light down center indicates the lair. BRIGHELLA and ARLECCHINO are playing cards around a small table. The following is very fast-paced.

BRIGHELLA: Four hearts.

ARLECCHINO: Five clubs.

BRIGHELLA: Six spades.

ARLECCHINO: Seven spades.

BRIGHELLA: Eight spades.

ARLECCHINO: Gin! (*spreads his cards on the table*)

BRIGHELLA: Arlecchino, we're not playing gin!

ARLECCHINO: I was.

BRIGHELLA: So?

ARLECCHINO: So I won that hand! (*scoops up cards*)

STUPINO enters from right with bags of sandwiches and a newspaper.

LAZZI OF SANDWICHES

STUPINO unpacks sandwiches onto table, takes one. ARLECCHINO takes a sandwich. Both start eating. BRIGHELLA clears his throat, indicating he would like a sandwich. ARLECCHINO carefully sets his own sandwich down, grabs STUPINO's sandwich in mid-bite, gives it to BRIGHELLA. STUPINO chews on nothing for a moment, then realizes sandwich is gone, starts looking for it. BRIGHELLA looks at the sandwich he has been handed, sees the bite out of it, puts it on table and gets another sandwich. STUPINO finds his original sandwich on the table.

STUPINO: There you are! Don't you run away again.

BRIGHELLA picks up newspaper, is struck by an item, whistles in amazement. Fast-paced.

ARLECCHINO: What is it, Boss?

BRIGHELLA: The Scarlet Heart!

ARLECCHINO: Queen of Clubs!

STUPINO: Have you any spades?

ARLECCHINO: Go fish!

BRIGHELLA: Not that kind of heart, you idiots! The Scarlet Heart Ruby! Four hundred and fifty carats of love, beauty, joy and everything else money can buy!

LAZZI OF THE NEWSPAPER

ARLECCHINO and STUPINO join him, their heads together in a row with BRIGHELLA in the middle, going back and forth as they read.

BRIGHELLA: “The Scarlet Heart arrives in Bergamo today, her location a closely guarded secret—

STUPINO: Bing!

Their heads jerk back to the other side like a typewriter.

BRIGHELLA: Property of Signore Pantalone, richest miser in Venice, the Scarlet Heart has been hunted by thieves—

ARLECCHINO: That’s us!

BRIGHELLA: —across Italy.

STUPINO: Bing! (*heads jerk back to other side*)

BRIGHELLA: The exact location of the gem, valued at four hundred and fifty million lire (*whistles*) is sure to be a closely guarded secret.

STUPINO: Bing!

Heads jerk back. BRIGHELLA puts down paper, the three thieves look out towards audience.

LAZZI OF BEING RICH

ARLECCHINO: If only we could get our hands on that!

BRIGHELLA: We’d be sultans! (*strikes a pose*)

ARLECCHINO: Millionaires! (*steps to BRIGHELLA’s right and strikes pose*)

STUPINO: Three Kings! (*steps to BRIGHELLA’s left and strikes pose, they are in a “Charlie’s Angels” moment*)

ARLECCHINO: (*scoops up cards, hands them to STUPINO*) Here you go.

BRIGHELLA: (*plucks a card from STUPINO and uses it as a puppet*) Dom Arlecchino!

ARLECCHINO: (*plucks a card and uses it as a puppet, bowing*) Count Brighella! Just look at our beautiful ruby!

BRIGHELLA: The size of an apple!

STUPINO: She was about that size.

ARLECCHINO: And just as ripe and red!

STUPINO: Even redder!

BRIGHELLA: See how she shines!

STUPINO: She was very shiny!

BRIGHELLA/ARLECCHINO: What are you talking about?

STUPINO: The Scarlet Heart.

BRIGHELLA: Stupino! What do you know about the Scarlet Heart?

STUPINO: I saw Signore Pantalone carry her into the Hotel Amatta when you sent me out for sandwiches.

ARLECCHINO: You did?

LAZZI OF BEING PANTALONE

STUPINO: Uh-huh! (*Holds sandwich cradled in his arms and sings as if he is Pantalone. To the tune of My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean.*) My ruby is here in my arms now, my ruby she makes me feel fine, my ruby she makes me a rich man, (*suddenly fierce*) so don't touch my baby she's mine!

BRIGHELLA: That sounds like Pantalone all right. We need to steal that stone!

ARLECCHINO: Bag that bonanza!

BRIGHELLA: Jimmy that gem!

ARLECCHINO: Scoop the Scarlet Heart!

STUPINO: (*still holding sandwich*) Can I have a napkin?

BRIGHELLA: (*pulls other two into a huddle*) We need to get into Hotel Amatta. Go get some fancy clothes so we can blend in.

ARLECCHINO: Right!

STUPINO: Right!

BRIGHELLA: All for one and one for all!

HANDSHAKE LAZZI

Complicated handshake with spitting between ARLECCHINO and BRIGHELLA, simple handshake between ARLECCHINO and STUPINO, BRIGHELLA pats STUPINO on head.

BRIGHELLA: I'll meet you at the Hotel Amatta in fifteen minutes!

ARLECCHINO and STUPINO exit right.

LAZZI OF COUNTING OUT SHARES

BRIGHELLA is very excited.

Four hundred and fifty million lire!

Counts out money to himself and imaginary Stupino and imaginary Arlecchino, putting them in the places they were right before they left. Squints at piles. Takes more money from Stupino's imaginary pile and adds it to his own pile. Squints at piles. Takes money from Arlecchino's imaginary pile and adds it to his own pile. Scoops up most of the money and puts it in his own pile.

Four hundred fifty million lire and a few... small... gifts to my helpful friends.

Eyes a lady audience member in the front row.

You gonna wanna know me later, bella! Ciao!

BRIGHELLA exits right.

LAZZI OF SIGNS

STUPINO crosses right to left with a sign: "Just a little while ago."

STUPINO: She's a flashback! Theatrical maaaaa-gic, oooooo...

Scene Two: Hotel Amatta Lobby

PULCINELLA snoozes behind the check-in counter. Door at left with sign “Hotel Amatta” written backwards (as if we are seeing it from the inside.) COLUMBINA stands near a potted plant, halfheartedly dusting it while moving as little as possible. FRANCESCA leans, sleeping, on a statue, duster in hand.

Phone rings. PULCINELLA lunges for phone. COLUMBINA begins busily dusting. FRANCESCA wakes and begins busily dusting.

PULCINELLA: Hotel Amatta, finest lodging in Lombardia featuring an all-you-can-eat spaghetti buffet, what’s Amatta with you?... Hello? (*puts phone down*) Wrong number. (*glares at maids*) Columbina! Francesca! What are you doing?

COLUMBINA: Dusting the frescoes!

FRANCESCA: Cleaning the statuary! (*she dusts the statue’s fig leaf*)

PULCINELLA: Don’t bother. We’ll be lucky if we all got jobs this time tomorrow. Nobody stays in a fine hotel anymore.

FRANCESCA: At least we have two reservations today.

LAZZI OF PANTALONE’S CHEAPNESS

PULCINELLA: Signore Pantalone! The richest miser in Lombardia! Sure, he’ll stay, but will he ever pay his bill? He’s so cheap his favorite mustard is Grey Coupon! He’s so stingy he’s saving the hair in his bathtub drain to make a toupee! Of all the rotten, penny-pinching, mean, tight-fisted, greedy— (*Bell on door rings, PANTALONE enters, cradling a bundle in his arms*) Signore!

PANTALONE: (*singing to the bundle in his arms to the tune of My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean*) My baby you make me so happy, my baby you make me so proud—

PULCINELLA bows deeply and motions to the maids to do the same.

PULCINELLA: Welcome to Hotel Amatta! What’s Amatta with you! And your charming... ward. I’m your proprietor, Master Pulcinella.

PANTALONE: (*to bundle in his arms*) Whosa baby? Who’s daddy’s little baby? Coochie-coo!

PULCINELLA: Signore, you want me to— (*reaches for bundle, a piece of cloth falls away and a bright red glow shines out*) Hey, that's not a baby! (*PANTALONE snatches it away and covers up the light*)

PANTALONE: Don't put your filthy paws on my darling little one!

PULCINELLA: (*aside, completely overcome*) Shiny! Red! Expensive! (*to PANTALONE*) Signore! Let me escort you to your room.

PANTALONE: Think I'm too old and foolish to find the way, do you?

PULCINELLA: Oh, no, Signore. (*aside*) If we can get our hands on that ruby, we can hold her for ransom! I bet he'd offer a reward.

PANTALONE: What's that?

PULCINELLA: Escorting you to your room is its own reward!

PANTALONE: Very well then, lead the way. But first, ah... the little Pantalone's room?

PULCINELLA: Right through here!

They exit left, PULCINELLA bowing and scraping.

COLUMBINA: If anything could get some piastras out of that old bag, stealing that stone would do it!

PULCINELLA: (*runs back in*) You two! Watch out for the other reservation, Capitano Botticelli. We need all the business we can get. (*PULCINELLA fluffs their skirts, aprons and hats*) Look cute!

PANTALONE: (*off*) Signore Pulcinella? I'm ready to be wiped!

PULCINELLA: (*shudders*) Augh... Coming! (*runs off left*)

Maids look totally grossed out, then shrug and start tidying again. They move the phone to the hotel room, move the potted plant out of the way, and turn the statue so that this area is now the kitchen.

LAZZI OF SIGNS

BRIGHELLA, not happy at doing this menial job, enters from right with sign "At the Same Time." He flips the sign over to say "In The Street Outside" and crosses back. He spots the lady he spoke to before and strikes a sexy pose, making a kissy face at her. BRIGHELLA exits right, COLUMBINA and FRANCESCA move the hotel door to center, change the sign to show that we are now outside the hotel, and exit left.

Scene Three: The Street

FLAVIO and FLAMINIA enter from right and stay right of the door. She fusses over him like a mother hen. They are very much in love.

FLAMINIA: Look on the bright side, Flavio. At least we know the jobs you're not suited for! We're narrowing the field!

FLAVIO: But Flaminia, when I took you from your family, your home, everything you knew and loved—

FLAMINIA: Flavio! Everything I knew, but not everything I loved!

Lights change.

LAZZI OF LOVE

"Love" sound effect or music. FLAMINIA looks at FLAVIO, they have a moment, sigh, look away, look back, air kiss on both cheeks and are overcome with emotion. Lights change back. FLAVIO discreetly waves a frilly lace hankie across his eyes, FLAMINIA touches up her lipstick in a gaudy mirror.

FLAMINIA: So we won't apply for anything else pig-related...

FLAVIO: Or that involves tools...

FLAMINIA: Or carrying things of any weight. No typing.

FLAVIO: Or filing. Whenever I get to F, I can't help thinking of you... and then, somehow, I never get to G...

Lights change.

LAZZI OF LOVE

"Love" sound effect or music. FLAVIO looks at FLAMINIA, they have a moment, sigh, look away, look back, air kiss on both cheeks, hankie wiping, lipstick touching-up. Lights change back.

FLAMINIA: (spots hotel over her shoulder in the mirror) That's it!

FLAVIO: What?

FLAMINIA: Amatta!

FLAVIO: What's amatta?

FLAMINIA: Hotel Amatta! (*turns him to face the hotel*) You'll be... a concierge!

FLAVIO: What does that do?

FLAMINIA: You stand at attention in the corner of the lobby (*FLAVIO stands at attention*) and smile at all the pretty ladies as they go by! (*FLAVIO smiles winningly*) Not that much. No eye contact. And you need some medals! Concierges always have medals. (*Scoops medals out of her purse, pins a medal on FLAVIO*) Good conduct. (*FLAVIO puffs up. FLAMINIA pins on a medal*) Perfect attendance. (*FLAVIO puffs more, FLAMINIA pins on another medal*) And an orderly retreat.

FLAVIO: (*deflates a little*) Oh.

FLAMINIA: Now stand up straight! Oh! My brave little soldier!

FLAVIO: (*seductively*) Field Nurse – I think I have a boo-boo...

FLAMINIA: Flavio! Not now! We need a job! Now... march into that hotel and show them what you're made of!

FLAVIO salutes, jabbing himself in the eye.

FLAVIO: Ow!

FLAMINIA (*salutes back*): Brave little soldier!

Both about-face and march through the hotel door. FLAVIO holds the door graciously for FLAMINIA, who flirts with him on the way in.

FLAMINIA: Grazie mille, my Capitano!

FRANCESCA and COLUMBINA pass them on the way out.

FRANCESCA: (*over her shoulder*) Here comes Capitano! Check him in!

LAZZI OF SIGNS

FRANCESCA and COLUMBINA do a sexy walk as they cross from left to right with sign "Same Day, Same Street." They upstage each other, wink at audience members, etc.

FRANCESCA: (*to an audience member*) DM me, baby!

COLUMBINA smacks her.

Scene Four: The Street

CAPITANO enters from right, in white sleeveless undershirt, boxers with humorous design, sock garters, black socks, dress shoes, fancy plumed hat.

LAZZI OF THE ROBBERY

CAPITANO: (to audience) I know what you're thinking. "What great misfortune can have happened to bring the great Capitano Botticelli so low?" I will tell you.

He acts it out as he speaks it.

I was walking, through the dark, forbidding streets. (lights lower) I could see not a step before me. (Lights go out, CAPITANO experiences a SWING in character) Turn 'em on! Turn 'em on! I want my blankie, Nursey, where's my blankie?

Spotlight on CAPITANO, who cowers, then recovers.

I was... striding... through the dark – but not too dark! – streets, when I was set upon by three... hundred hoodlums! They beat me cruelly with sticks (SWING) and it hurt it hurt I want my Nursey, where's my (SWING) – sword, I cried! And I lay about me to the left! To the right! (SWING) But the little one kicked me in the bottom and stole my trousers, Nursey, he took my big boy pants! (SWING) And foully robbed me of my jacket and my shirt and my medals for good conduct, perfect attendance, and retreating in an orderly fashion. I shall be revenged! As heaven is my witness, I'll never go naked again! (Triumphant pose. Lights out. SWING.) Ahhhh! Don't let the monsters get me, Nursey! (He runs off in the dark. A continuous scream as he travels either fully around the backstage or fully around the audience. Lights up again. CAPITANO runs back on, still screaming.) Ahhhh! (Sees hotel door, SWING, now a sigh instead of a scream) Ahhhh... The Hotel Amatta. Here I will collect myself and plot my murderous revenge.

Knocks on door. PULCINELLA leans out and looks him up and down.

PULCINELLA: No panhandlers, vagabonds, upright men, hoboes, vagrants, drifters or layabouts.

Slams door. CAPITANO knocks. PULCINELLA opens door and leans out again.

CAPITANO: But I—

PULCINELLA: Also no gypsies, tramps and thieves.

Slams door. CAPITANO knocks. PULCINELLA opens door and leans out again.

CAPITANO: Signore, I am Capitano Botticelli, and I have a reservation!

PULCINELLA: And I'm a small head of red cabbage, and I have a case of flatulence for any man stupid enough to eat me. (*PULCINELLA goes to slam door, CAPITANO stops the door*)

CAPITANO: My good man, how do you know I'm not Capitano Botticelli?

PULCINELLA: One. Capitano Botticelli always wears pants. Known for it. A pants-wearing man. You, have no pants. Two. Il Capitano wears medals for good conduct, perfect attendance and an orderly retreat on his jacket. You, have neither medals nor jacket to pin them on. And Three. Capitano Botticelli has already checked in. Look, try the back, amico, I'm sure there's something festering in the kitchen for you. Have a nice day. (*slams door*)

CAPITANO: (*dumbfounded*) Already checked in? Is it possible that I am no longer Il Capitano Botticelli, but an unfortunate madman, cursed to believe I am living a life of borrowed greatness? Wait... I know...

LAZZI OF MUSCLES

Flexes left bicep. Flexes right bicep. Does a muscle pose. Turns upstage and does another muscle pose. Flexes rear end. Turns downstage, lifts shirt and ripples stomach muscles. If the actor does not have stomach muscles, draw them on with a magic marker. If the actor is a woman, a fake hairy chest would be appropriate. CAPITANO is convinced. He strikes a powerful pose and bellows triumphantly.

I am Capitano Luigi Martinelli Boisteroso Botticelli! The sole possessor of that name and title! I shall enter the Hotel Amatta by the kitchen. I shall plot my revenge upon this imposter, whosoever he may be, and as Heaven is my witness, I'll never be pantsless again!

Triumphant pose. Lights out. SWING.

Nursey? Nursey? Can I have my boo-bear?

CAPITANO exits fearfully.

LAZZI OF SIGNS

PANTALONE crosses very very slowly from right to left with a sign, "In The Hotel Kitchen." Every few paces he stops and strikes what he thinks is a sexy pose. For his last pose, he jingles his money pouch and connects with a lady in the audience. He exits.

Scene Five: Hotel Kitchen**LAZZI OF SPIES**

Spy music. BRIGHELLA, ARLECCHINO, and STUPINO enter like spies. They take up poses. ARLECCHINO and STUPINO ditch Capitano's clothes into the corner of the kitchen. STUPINO climbs into the fridge to hide. Spy music stops.

BRIGHELLA: We need a plan.

ARLECCHINO: A cunning plan.

BRIGHELLA: A flawless plan.

ARLECCHINO: A flaw without any plans!

BRIGHELLA: To steal... the Scarlet Heart!

ARLECCHINO: Dum dum dum!

STUPINO: (*opens fridge door*) Yes? (*BRIGHELLA kicks door shut*) Ow!

COLUMBINA and FRANCESCA are heard singing offstage. ARLECCHINO and BRIGHELLA hide behind the fridge. COLUMBINA and FRANCESCA enter. FRANCESCA dusts. COLUMBINA goes to fridge, opens door, sees STUPINO. COLUMBINA screams. STUPINO screams. FRANCESCA screams. STUPINO screams. COLUMBINA hauls out STUPINO by the ear. STUPINO screams again.

COLUMBINA: Scoundrel! What are you doing in my Frigidaire?

STUPINO: I'm a thief, and I'm here to steal—ow!

BRIGHELLA whacks STUPINO to stop him talking. ARLECCHINO and BRIGHELLA muffle STUPINO while trying to look casual.

COLUMBINA: Who are you and what are you doing in my kitchen?

Lights change.

LAZZI OF LOVE

“Love” sound effect or music. ARLECCHINO has a moment of deep love. Lights change back.

ARLECCHINO: Arlecchino of Bergamo, Bella Signorina! And this fine fellow is Brighella, also of Bergamo, and this poor unfortunate –
(kicks STUPINO)

STUPINO: Ow!

ARLECCHINO: –is our minion, Stupino.

STUPINO: (*pleased*) I’m a minion!

ARLECCHINO: And we are a gang—

BRIGHELLA: Group—

ARLECCHINO: Group of international... appraisers. We’ve been sent here by an... insurance company, who would like us to... check out the famous Scarlet Heart.

COLUMBINA: I see.

ARLECCHINO: We’d like your help, Signorina. I’d like to infiltrate...

BRIGHELLA: (*cuts him off*) That is, disguise ourselves.

COLUMBINA: You boys are in luck. I got a closet full of uniforms right here. We’ll get you three dressed up and you’ll be able to infiltrate Pantalone’s room, steal – I mean appraise – the Scarlet Heart, and be on your way!

*BRIGHELLA, STUPINO, ARLECCHINO exit left.
FRANCESCA enters from her dusting.*

FRANCESCA: What are you doing?

COLUMBINA: They’ll dress as maids, I’ll show them to Pantalone’s room—

FRANCESCA: (*shocked*) Columbina!

COLUMBINA: And then call the carabinieri on them! Pantalone’s sure to reward me for saving his precious ruby!

FRANCESCA: (*admiring*) Columbina! And they think you’re helping them?

COLUMBINA: They're men, they'll believe anything.

BRIGHELLA, ARLECCHINO, STUPINO enter from left as maids.

COLUMBINA: (*pretending to be astonished*) You look just like women!

FRANCESCA: Yeah, no-one would ever guess.

Thieves all believe the girls and hi-five each other.

BRIGHELLA: Yeah!

ARLECCHINO: All right!

STUPINO: I feel pretty!

COLUMBINA and FRANCESCA can barely keep from laughing. PULCINELLA is heard.

PULCINELLA (*off*): Columbina! Francesca! Room service! (*entering from right, sees thieves in maid uniforms*) Who's this?

COLUMBINA: These are my cousins from back home in Certaldo.
They're going to work for us – for free – while I teach them how to be good servants.

BRIGHELLA (*high voice*): I love dusting! (*hits STUPINO*)

STUPINO (*high voice*): I love washing!

ARLECCHINO (*normal voice*): I love Columbina! (*high voice*) I mean, scrubbing!

COLUMBINA: Right. This is—

BRIGHELLA: Brigheltina!

COLUMBINA: And—

ARLECCHINO: Arlecchina!

COLUMBINA: And—

STUPINO: I'm Marsha!

All very fast, à la The Brady Bunch. Change to "Marshall" if Stupino is a female character disguised as a man.

BRIGHELLA: Marsha?

ARLECCHINO: Marsha?

STUPINO: Marsha!

PULCINELLA: (to BRIGHELLA) Aren't you a fine specimen of country living...

BRIGHELLA giggles fetchingly. FRANCESCA makes noise of disgust.

ARLECCHINO: (aside to COLUMBINA) Do I still look manly?

COLUMBINA: Still?

STUPINO picks up a large ladle and sees his face in it. The lights change.

LAZZI OF LOVE

"Love" sound effect or music.

STUPINO: You're pretty! What's your name?

Lights change back.

PULCINELLA: Columbina! Arlecchina! You two take this bottle of champagne up to Pantalone's room. On the house. (*shudders, then looks at BRIGHELLA and cheers up*) And you, Brigheltina... come with me. (*smacks BRIGHELLA on the bottom*)

BRIGHELLA: (*screams*) Ahh! I mean, ahhhh, one moment signore, while I give my sister some advice about... carrying things. (*pulls ARLECCHINO aside*) This is it! Our chance to get the Scarlet Heart!

They look over each others' shoulders. ARLECCHINO waves lovingly at COLUMBINA. BRIGHELLA waves lovingly at PULCINELLA.

HANDSHAKE LAZZI

They do the thieves' handshake with spitting, then notice other people watching and do girlish air kisses. BRIGHELLA and PULCINELLA exit left. ARLECCHINO and COLUMBINA grab the champagne bucket and exit right. STUPINO waltzes offstage happily with the ladle – he is in love.

Scene Six: Hotel Kitchen

CAPITANO enters the kitchen boldly. SWING. He sees his discarded clothes in the corner and shrieks in fear. SWING. He notices the audience and pulls himself together.

CAPITANO: *(to the clothes)* You there! Sitting in the corner so casually, wearing my clothes! Stand and face me!

LAZZI OF FIGHTING WITH HIS OWN CLOTHES

CAPITANO assumes a ready-to-fight position.

CAPITANO: You refuse to fight, coward? You leave me no choice but to attack! *(he dives into the clothes, wrestles them across the kitchen floor and pins the tunic and trousers.)* Have you had enough? *(He realizes that no-one's in the clothes)* Ah-hah! Frightened you off, did I? *(strokes the clothes and starts to gather them up)* My trousers... My tunic... My medals... My panache – no, I had the hat. Miscreant! I am close behind you! As Heaven is my witness, I'll never sneak into a hotel kitchen again! *(Triumphantly poses, then exits boldly.)*

LAZZI OF SIGNS

PULCINELLA crosses from left to right with sign "The False Capitano's Room."

PULCINELLA *(to audience)*: Anybody need a room? We still got vacancy!

Scene Seven: "Capitano's" Room

A hotel room with a bed, table with bouquet in vase, and closet. There is a picture and a vase on the nightstand and bright pillows and bedspread on the bed. FLAVIO and FLAMINIA are looking around.

FLAMINIA: Your true worth has finally been recognized. A lovely hotel... A well-appointed room... *(she poses)*

FLAVIO: ...My beautiful blushing bride beside me, what more could I want?

FLAMINIA: It's like a second honeymoon!

Lights change.

LAZZI OF LOVE

“Love” sound effect or music. FLAVIO looks at FLAMINIA, they have a moment, sigh, look away, look back, air kiss on both cheeks, hankie wiping, lipstick touching-up. Lights change back.

FLAMINIA: This calls for champagne! (*Picks up phone*) Room Service!

They pass the phone back and forth while talking to Room Service.

LAZZI OF EXPENSIVE THINGS

FLAVIO: Truffles!

FLAMINIA: Caviar!

FLAVIO: Lotions!

FLAMINIA: Chocolates!

FLAVIO: Sweets for my sweet!

FLAMINIA: Dainties for my darling!

BOTH: Charge it to the room, please!

They hang up. FLAVIO and FLAMINIA start to sweetly chase each other around the room and exit left. FRANCESCA enters, flips the picture and turns the vase, making the room another room.

LAZZI OF SIGNS

Overlapping, STUPINO crosses, holding the ladle and a sign that says “Pantalone’s Room.” STUPINO flirts with the ladle, kisses it and chases it off stage.

Scene Eight: Pantalone’s Room

Knocking is heard.

ARLECCHINO: (*From off. Loud girlish voice.*) Signore Pantalone? Champagne on the house for you.

COLUMBINA: (*also loud*) That means free, Signore!

ARLECCHINO and COLUMBINA put their heads in through the door.

COLUMBINA: (*softer*) Signore Pantalone...?

ARLECCHINO: Free champagne...?

LAZZI OF SEARCHING AND FLIRTING

They set the champagne on the table and begin to search the room. COLUMBINA looks under the bed, ARLECCHINO appreciates her rear end. ARLECCHINO looks under the table, COLUMBINA notices his rear end – it's OK. ARLECCHINO moves in and almost kisses COLUMBINA. Suddenly, CAPITANO's heavy footsteps are heard.

CAPITANO: Felon! You cannot escape me!

COLUMBINA: Someone's coming!

COLUMBINA shoves ARLECCHINO into the closet and follows him, closing the closet door after them. CAPITANO bursts through the room door and strides around the room.

CAPITANO: I know you're in here somewhere. Ruffian!

There is the sound of BRIGHELLA and PULCINELLA flirting outside the door.

PULCINELLA: Come to papa, my little rutabaga!

BRIGHELLA giggles in a high pitched voice.

COLUMBINA: (peeking out of closet) This big baboon's going to give us away!

CAPITANO: (SWING, screams) Ahhhh! Closet monster!

As CAPITANO cowers and stumbles, ARLECCHINO opens the closet door. COLUMBINA puts her arms around CAPITANO and yanks him inside.

LAZZI OF THE CLOSET MONSTER

CAPITANO: Tentacles, tentacles! Soft, gentle, sweet-smelling...
(SWING) Hey! What are you doing in here?

COLUMBINA: Shhh! (shuts closet door)

BRIGHELLA and PULCINELLA enter through the door with a basket of shiny red apples and two more champagne bottles. BRIGHELLA sets apple basket on table. PULCINELLA sets champagne bottles on table.

PULCINELLA: Signore Pantalone's in the spa, having his knees waxed.

BRIGHELLA: (*man's voice*) Ugh! I mean, (*girl's voice*) Oh!

PULCINELLA: Which leaves us with a little time...

BRIGHELLA: (*man's voice*) To hunt for the Scarlet Heart!

PULCINELLA: What?

BRIGHELLA: (*girl's voice*) I fear you've captured my heart!

LAZZI OF SEARCHING AND FLIRTING WITH ACROBATICS

PULCINELLA leans in to kiss BRIGHELLA, who squeals and pulls away. PULCINELLA twirls BRIGHELLA back into his arms.

BRIGHELLA: (*girl's voice*) My virtue!

PULCINELLA: I want to pluck it like a beautiful flower!

BRIGHELLA: (*man's voice*) I'll cut you!

PULCINELLA: Feisty! Row!

BRIGHELLA twirls back out, opens closet door, COLUMBINA pulls closet door shut again as PULCINELLA twirls BRIGHELLA back, grabs BRIGHELLA's waist and lifts him to sitting with his legs wrapped around PULCINELLA's waist, facing each other. PULCINELLA kisses toward BRIGHELLA, hitting the air left and right as BRIGHELLA dodges. BRIGHELLA backbends off PULCINELLA, puts his hands on the floor, flips his legs over and lands standing on the floor. ARLECCHINO opens the closet to see what's happening but PULCINELLA lunges for BRIGHELLA who backs against the closet door, slamming it shut. PULCINELLA pins him against the door and goes in for the kiss. STUPINO is heard singing outside the door.

STUPINO: (*singing to the same tune*) My baby you make me so happy, my baby you're looking so fine, my baby you're here in my arms now, so let's go in here and have wine... (*continues to sing through the following*)

PULCINELLA & BRIGHELLA: (*simultaneous look to audience*) Pantalone! (*look to each other*)

BRIGHELLA: Get in the closet!

BRIGHELLA yanks open the closet, gets in, pulls PULCINELLA in after him, shuts door. STUPINO's singing pauses. Silence.

PULCINELLA (*in closet*): I don't wanna spoil it for you, Brigheltina, but I don't think we're alone.

COLUMBINA/ARLECCHINO/CAPITANO: Shhh!

STUPINO enters through the door, again singing to the ladle.

STUPINO: (*singing to the same tune*) My baby you're right here beside me, and I love your beautiful face... (*kisses the ladle, speaks*) I like long walks on the beach, quiet evenings at home and gladiator movies. Now tell me all about you! (*Sits on bed, something hurts him*) Ow! (*reaches under mattress, pulls out the Scarlet Heart, which shines with a bright red glow*) Oh, look! A big ruby!

CHARIVARI – COLUMBINA, ARLECCHINO, BRIGHELLA, PULCINELLA, burst out of the closet in that order. CAPITANO stays in the closet, looking out the door. STUPINO screams and throws the ruby into the air. COLUMBINA catches the ruby and stuffs it down her shirt. ARLECCHINO starts to dive for it, COLUMBINA stops his hand, pulls out the ruby herself and puts it in his hand.

ARLECCHINO: Second base!

COLUMBINA punches ARLECCHINO in the face, which tosses the ruby out of his hand to BRIGHELLA. She grabs a champagne bottle from the table to use as a club and starts after BRIGHELLA. BRIGHELLA runs for the door, but PULCINELLA grabs his hand, twirls him in, and plants a big kiss on him. CAPITANO screams and shuts the closet door.

PULCINELLA: (*coming out of the kiss*) Danger excites me!

BRIGHELLA struggles away coughing and spitting. STUPINO pats him hard on the back and the ruby gets knocked out of BRIGHELLA's hand and tossed to PULCINELLA. COLUMBINA starts after PULCINELLA. ARLECCHINO chases after COLUMBINA. STUPINO climbs on the table and hugs his ladle protectively.

STUPINO: Don't worry, sweetheart!

PULCINELLA (*holding the ruby high with his back to the table*): The Scarlet Heart!

STUPINO: Ooo, tasty! (*scoops up the ruby with the ladle from above*)

PULCINELLA: (*looks at his empty hand*) Hey!

BRIGHELLA grabs a champagne bottle from the table and knocks out PULCINELLA, who collapses. ARLECCHINO tags COLUMBINA.

ARLECCHINO: You're it!

COLUMBINA chases ARLECCHINO.

STUPINO: (*takes a bite of the ruby and hurts his teeth*) Ow! This isn't a very good apple.

STUPINO puts the ruby in the basket and picks up another apple, starts to eat it, offers some to the ladle. CAPITANO peeks out of the closet and sees STUPINO.

CAPITANO: You! You're one of the pack of thieves who stole my trousers!

CAPITANO gets out of the closet and starts toward the table. PULCINELLA recovers consciousness and sees BRIGHELLA. He lunges toward BRIGHELLA, knocking over CAPITANO.

PULCINELLA: Darling!

CAPITANO again starts toward STUPINO, but is knocked out of the way as COLUMBINA and ARLECCHINO run by. BRIGHELLA runs from PULCINELLA, who chases him. COLUMBINA tackles ARLECCHINO on the bed. They have a moment.

COLUMBINA: (*angry*) Why, you...

Lights change.

LAZZI OF LOVE

"Love" sound effect or music.

COLUMBINA: Darling!

ARLECCHINO: Angel!

COLUMBINA: Tesoro!

ARLECCHINO: Bambolina!

COLUMBINA and ARLECCHINO kiss passionately on the bed OR continue saying endearments to each other. Lights change back. BRIGHELLA and PULCINELLA go around the room and over the bed, stepping on COLUMBINA and ARLECCHINO and knocking down CAPITANO.

COLUMBINA (when stepped on): Ow!

ARLECCHINO: Oh yeah! (or just “Ow! for a G-rating)

CAPITANO: (struggling to his feet, to STUPINO) Brigand! I challenge you to a duel!

STUPINO: (clutching ladle) Oh, Signore, have pity on a man in love!

CAPITANO: I have no pity when it comes to trousers!

STUPINO: (presents the ladle) No, dear, don’t sacrifice yourself for me!
(throws the ladle at CAPITANO, who catches it and chases STUPINO off and around the table with the ladle)

CAPITANO: Coward! Stand and fight!

BRIGHELLA grabs an apple from the basket and throws it at PULCINELLA, then another apple, then a third apple. PULCINELLA starts juggling. BRIGHELLA throws three more apples into the juggling pattern, and they both juggle down right, passing the six apples back and forth between them. (this can be just three apples between the two of them if you don’t have actors who can juggle with passing) CAPITANO and STUPINO circle downstage and run between the jugglers, passing through the patter.

PANTALONE (entering through the door): What’s going on in here?!

EVERYONE freezes, juggling continues.

PULCINELLA & BRIGHELLA: In-room entertainment, Signore!

COLUMBINA & ARLECCHINO: Testing your mattress for firmness, Signore!

CAPITANO: Pest control! (whacks STUPINO on head with ladle)

STUPINO: Ow!

PANTALONE: Out of my room all of you!

STUPINO picks up the apple basket. PANTALONE, waving his cane, chases PULCINELLA, who throws his apples one by one, STUPINO catching them in the basket. PULCINELLA chases BRIGHELLA, who throws his apples into the basket. CAPITANO runs, waving the ladle and crying with fear. STUPINO sets the basket on the table and chases CAPITANO, trying to grab the ladle. The chase goes around the room and over the bed.

COLUMBINA: Ow!

ARLECCHINO: Oh, yeah! (or “Ow!” for a G-rating)

On his way over the bed, BRIGHELLA grabs ARLECCHINO and gets him into the chase line.

BRIGHELLA: Can you please focus?

ARLECCHINO: I was focused.

COLUMBINA: Hey! (*jumps up and follows ARLECCHINO*)

Entire chase line circles and catches up behind PANTALONE, who has a heart attack and falls down.

LAZZI OF MEDICAL TREATMENT

COLUMBINA: Signore Pantalone?

STUPINO: Are you dead?

PULCINELLA: Don't let him die on the property!

CAPITANO: I'll handle this! (*CAPITANO rolls up his sleeves, rubs his hands together and uses them as defibrillator shock paddles*) Clear!

CAPITANO shocks PANTALONE's chest. PANTALONE writhes.

BRIGHELLA: How do you do that?

CAPITANO: It's my personal magnetism.

PANTALONE: I see a white light!

COLUMBINA: Is there a red sparkle?

PANTALONE: The Scarlet Heart...

EVERYONE is suddenly silent and leans in to listen.

ABOUT COMMEDIA

Commedia dell'arte is a form of theatre from 14th century Italy that spread throughout Europe. It was the first place for female actors and professional theatre troupes. The style features broad comedy, simple situations, and stereotypical characters with clear needs, who will do anything to get what they want.

The plays were presented in public marketplaces, at festivals, and in theatres by troupes of actors who worked together their whole lives, and who were comfortable improvising with each other as well as presenting rehearsed scenes.

The commedia style can still be seen today in shows like *That 70's Show*, *The Simpsons*, and Bugs Bunny cartoons.

WHAT IS A LAZZI?

Throughout the script, you'll see the word *lazzi* ("LAHT-see"), which means "jokes" in Italian. In commedia, a *lazzi* (English-speaking troupes use the plural to mean one or more jokes) is a well-rehearsed comic bit that can be easily performed on the spot, or "plugged in" to a script they are performing.

Lazzi are used to express characters more fully, fill time, increase the number of laughs in a show, or cover technical mishaps or delays. They're also fun for the actors.

In traditional commedia, actors played the same character and worked with the same troupe of actors their whole lives. Each actor prepared their own *lazzi* specific to their talents and character, as well as having access to a handwritten *lazzi* book that might be owned by the company or passed down from an older actor who had played the same character, often a parent or relative. Just as actors today keep notebooks or journals to record their work in class and rehearsal, commedia actors kept written records of jokes and comic bits they wanted to remember and repeat.

There are *lazzi* mentioned specifically throughout *The Scarlet Heart*, and you can play them as written, expand them, or use them as starters for improvisation. You can also choose to include comic bits from the list of Additional *Lazzi* following the scenario, find ideas from other sources, or create your own.

It's important that all the performers and the director are in agreement about how much improvisation is OK during performances. For example, in a competition setting, the actors must be aware of the length of the play and improvisation may not be possible; if your intention is an 80-minute play from 30 minutes of actual script, more *lazzi* can be planned and there's time to explore more spontaneous moments.

THE SCARLET HEART SCENARIOS

A scene-by-scene overview of the play, these pages may be used as the basis for the actors to improvise their words and actions. This can be done in rehearsal, with the script developed and “set” before performing for an audience, or a very brave and well-practiced troupe may improvise all or parts of the show in performance.

If you're working with the scenario, it's even more important that each actor keep a notebook, writing down very specifically what lazzi, great character moments, and funny lines happen in rehearsals. This gives the actors freedom to explore and respond to each other truly in the moment, secure in the knowledge that they can go back to a good bit and remember it well enough to re-introduce it. A video camera can also be very helpful; regardless of image quality, being able to play back the scene lets the actors continue working, secure in the knowledge they can write it down later.

Scene One: The Thieves' Lair

BRIGHELLA, ARLECCHINO, STUPINO

Brighella and Arlecchino play cards. Arlecchino wins by cheating or deliberately misunderstanding the game.

Stupino enters with sandwiches, an apple and a newspaper. LAZZI OF SANDWICHES, in which Stupino unpacks and passes around the sandwiches, and gets done out of his own sandwich.

Brighella reads about the Scarlet Heart, a famous ruby, in the newspaper. LAZZI OF THE NEWSPAPER in which the thieves all read in the newspaper that Signor Pantalone is coming to Bergamo today with his ruby. LAZZI OF BEING RICH, in which the thieves imagine their wealthy lives if they could steal the Scarlet Heart.

Stupino announces that he saw the ruby that morning at Hotel Amatta with Pantalone, and it's the size of an apple. LAZZI OF BEING PANTALONE in which Stupino shows Pantalone treating his ruby like it's a baby.

The thieves plot to steal the ruby, first by getting some fancy clothes to blend in at the Hotel Amatta. HANDSHAKE LAZZI between the thieves. Arlecchino and Stupino leave to begin the plan. Brighella plots to keep the money for himself in the LAZZI OF COUNTING OUT SHARES.

LAZZI OF SIGNS – Stupino crosses with a sign announcing a flashback.

Notes

Scene Two: Hotel Amatta Lobby

PULCINELLA, FRANCESCA, COLUMBINA, PANTALONE (AND BRIGHELLA AT SCENE CHANGE)

Pulcinella, Francesca and Columbina sleep at their posts while awaiting the guests who never come. The phone rings, waking everyone. Pulcinella answers the phone, the maids try to look busy. It's a wrong number. Everyone is discouraged, but at least Signor Pantalone is checking in today. LAZZI OF HOW CHEAP IS PANTALONE, in which Pulcinella tells how cheap their guest is.

Pantalone enters with a "baby" in his arms. Pulcinella tries to hold the baby and discovers it's the Scarlet Heart. Pantalone asks the way to the men's room and Pulcinella leads him there, telling the maids to watch out for Capitano Botticelli, today's second guest.

Columbina tells Francesca that stealing the ruby might get some money from Pantalone. The maids do a set change, making the lobby the kitchen and changing the door to show that we are outside.

LAZZI OF SIGNS – Brighella crosses with a sign announcing that we are now in the street. As he crosses, he flirts with ladies in the audience.

Notes

Scene Three: The Street*FLAVIO AND FLAMINIA (AND COLUMBINA AND FRANCESCA AT SCENE CHANGE)*

The lovers Flavio and Flaminia bemoan Flavio's failure to keep a job despite his wish to provide for Flaminia in the style she was accustomed to in her father's house. Flaminia reassures Flavio she loves him. LAZZI OF LOVE in which Flavio and Flaminia have a moment of deep love and over-the-top emotion, perhaps with music or a sound effect.

They try to think of jobs for Flavio, but he is always distracted by thoughts of Flaminia. LAZZI OF LOVE repeats. Flaminia spots the Hotel Amatta and announces that Flavio will be a concierge. She pins medals on his chest and they practice concierge-ing.

The lovers enter the hotel with Flaminia addressing Flavio as "Capitano," which is overheard by Francesca, who announces that Capitano has arrived.

LAZZI OF SIGNS – Columbina and Francesca cross with a sign that indicates the same time and place. As they cross, they flirt with the audience.

Notes

Scene Four: The Street

CAPITANO, PULCINELLA (AND PANTALONE AT SCENE CHANGE)

Capitano enters in humorous underwear and introduces himself and his bravery. He re-enacts the terrible robbery of his medals and clothes in the LAZZI OF THE ROBBERY. His version of the story is heroic, but he keeps scaring himself. He repeatedly swings between powerful and terrified.

Capitano knocks on the hotel door. Pulcinella takes him for a tramp and refuses to let him in. Pulcinella says Capitano has already checked in, he recognized the medals the man wore, and slams the door in the real Capitano's face.

Capitano questions his identity, then flexes and poses in the LAZZI OF MUSCLES, convinces himself of his own identity and plans revenge.

LAZZI OF SIGNS – Pantalone crosses with a sign indicating the hotel kitchen. He attempts to flirt with the audience as he crosses, but is very, very old.

Notes

Scene Ten: Hotel Lobby

PULCINELLA, FRANCESCA, FLAVIO, FLAMINIA, PANTALONE, CAPITANO, STUPINO, BRIGHELLA, ARLECCHINO, COLUMBINA

Pulcinella and Francesca total Flavio and Flaminia's bill in the LAZZI OF EXPENSIVE THINGS.

Flavio, Flaminia and Pantalone enter. Pulcinella demands money for the lovers' enormous bill. Flavio and Flaminia announce that there has been a kidnapping, and Pantalone bemoans the loss of his baby. Pulcinella realizes there is no baby, just a big ruby.

Everyone else chases in.

Flavio tries to bite his "apple" and everyone discovers that he's holding the ruby. Pulcinella takes credit by announcing that Flavio is the new assistant manager of Hotel Amatta. Pantalone rewards Flavio for his discovery with a sack of money. Pulcinella takes the money for the lovers' bill.

Pantalone loves the ruby, Stupino loves the ladle and Arlecchino and Columbina love each other. Capitano kisses Francesca's hand. Brighella reveals to Pulcinella that he's male and they shake hands. Everyone is happy and they salute Hotel Amatta.

LAZZI OF SIGNS – Stupino indicates the play is over.

Notes

WORKING WITH LAZZI – A LONGER PLAY

The play can be made longer by adding more lazzi, or lengthening a specific lazzi in the scenario, either with physical action or additional scripted and/or improvised dialogue.

For example, the LAZZI OF THE LOST BABY in Scene Nine, in which Pantalone mourns the missing Scarlet Heart, could be as short as:

PANTALONE: My baby's gone! My sweet darling, my little Pantalone Junior, my Scarlet Heart!

Or as long as:

PANTALONE: *(weeping, grabs an apple from the basket to act this out)* How I loved to feed you and play with you and rock you to sleep, my shiny little darling! How we would have grown together, those days when you said your first word *(he listens to the apple)* Did you say Da-da? Yes you did, yes you did my little carbon-based baby! How I would have loved to watch you take your first steps... *(he sets the apple on the floor and watches it sit there)* To see you rolling off to school... *(He rolls the apple along the floor, then sets it on the table and raises its stem like it's raising its hand)* Yes, teacher, I know the answer! 1492! The square of the sum of the three sides! Mussolini! And when you finally met that special someone and I had to have them killed... Oh, the times we would have shared! The laughter... the tears... the money... My poor, lost baby! Where have you gone!

The dialogue here – or that the actor invents – could be used entirely in Scene Nine, revised to be spoken when Pantalone enters with the ruby in Scene Two, used a few sentences at a time as a running joke each time Pantalone appears, or Pantalone could carry and talk to “his baby” in his LAZZI OF SIGNS between Scenes Five and Six.

You can also extend a lazzi with additional physical action. For example, the LAZZI OF SPIES in Scene Six, in which the thieves enter the kitchen, could become an entire sequence with athletic entrances, sneaking in through the audience, and playing with all the conventions of spy movies that are familiar to the audience.

Feel free to invent your own lazzi, either from research, inspiration or improvisation.

Lazzi don't have to “make sense” as in modern realism. Because commedia is about spending time with the characters, as long as the lazzi truthfully comes out of the character's drive, and you can figure out a way to (even loosely) connect it to the plot, you're fine. “This is really funny” is a good enough reason to put a lazzi in. And because lazzi tend to be self-contained and not necessary to understand the story, it's easy to cut one for time, or if it's not working.

Remember, too, to leave your audience wanting more. Some of the best lazzi are only a line or two – cut to the best two sentences!

SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL LAZZI

Scene One: *The Thieves' Lair*

LAZZI OF CARDS, in which Arlecchino claims to be playing (and winning) a different game every time Brighella deals, ending with Fifty-Two Pickup.

LAZZI OF DUM-DUM-DUM, in which Arlecchino, Brighella and Stupino create a plan while repeating the dialogue format of: Brighella line, Arlecchino repeats, Brighella finishes the line, Arlecchino makes ominous music sound, Stupino answers to “Dum-Dum” and is physically squashed.
Example:

Brighella: To steal...

Arlecchino: To steal...

Brighella: The Scarlet Heart!

Arlecchino: Dum-dum-dum!

Stupino: Yes?

Arlecchino: No! (*shoves Stupino out of the way*)

Scene Two: *Hotel Amatta Lobby*

FLY LAZZI, in which Columbina stalks and tries to kill a fly, becoming a safari hunter, a Texas quail-shooter, and a ninja.

LAZZI OF HOW CHEAP IS PANTALONE, in which Pulcinella does “how cheap is he?” call-and-response jokes with the audience. Example:

Pulcinella: Pantalone is soooooo cheap...

Audience: How cheap is he?

Pulcinella: His favourite mustard is Grey Coupon!

LAZZI OF BOWING, in which the hotel staff all bow in sequence to Pantalone and it becomes a “traditional Italian welcoming dance” that involves Pantalone.

LAZZI OF PANTALONE'S DEAFNESS, in which the hotel staff talk trash about Pantalone, but claim to have said something else when Pantalone asks them to repeat themselves or speak up, as when Pulcinella justifies “I bet he'd offer a reward” as “Escorting you to your room is its own reward.”

Scene Three: *The Street*

LAZZI OF ELOPEMENT, in which Flavio and Flaminia re-create their courting, and how Flavio impressed Flaminia enough to elope. Could include a song or poem.

LAZZI OF INAPPROPRIATE JOBS, in which Flavio and Flaminia consider the disasters that Flavio has created at each job he's tried.

LAZZI OF DISTRACTION, in which Flavio assumes his concierge role and tries to maintain his composure while Flaminia sashays by him as a "pretty lady." Flavio is overcome and grabs, dips and kisses Flaminia. She fends him off and fixes his posture.

LAZZI OF KISSING in which Flavio gets kisses from Flaminia, first asking her to "kiss his boo-boo" as her brave little soldier, then getting her to work her way up his arm to his lips or cheek.

Additional Scene: Street

ARLECCHINO, BRIGHELLA, STUPINO

This scene may be added between scenes three and four, presenting the robbery of Capitano from the thieves' perspective.

The thieves sneak in. Arlecchino and Stupino enter in Capitano's clothes, which they have stolen. Brighella upbraids them for stealing from the military. Arlecchino and Stupino show that the man they robbed was a crybaby and a coward as they re-enact what happened in the LAZZI OF THE ROBBERY. As they show Brighella, Stupino becomes the victim and gets beaten up by Arlecchino and Brighella. The thieves exit, sneaking around the back of the hotel.

Scene Four: Street

LAZZI OF THE BRAVERY in which Capitano introduces "my famous bravery" as if it is an actual person and then begins to interact with it, starts a fight, and defeats himself.

LAZZI OF THE TERRIBLE KITCHEN, in which Pulcinella offers Capitano a meal of scraps, describing what's left in the kitchen and why it needs to be cleaned out. "Tell the cook to clean out the fridge, we got things with nine legs crawling out of the vegetable bins."

Scene Five: Hotel Kitchen

LAZZI OF DUM-DUM-DUM, as in Scene One.

LAZZI OF SINGING, in which the maids enter singing a song. This can be a whole song if the maids are good singers; perhaps a traditional round that leads to a naughty pun; you could also use a modern pop song, sung straight or sung in a "Renaissance" or folk style.

LAZZI OF THE FRIGIDAIRE, in which Columbina discovers Stupino in the fridge because he keeps handing her ingredients. She thanks him each time, growing gradually more suspicious until she discovers him and hauls him out.

LAZZI OF SCREAMS, in which the maids and the thieves discover each other and scream in fear in a repeating pattern.

LAZZI OF COURTING COLUMBINA SERIOUSLY, in which Arlecchino sings a song, recites a poem, or otherwise courts Columbina.

LAZZI OF THE KITCHEN BOUQUET, in which Arlecchino fashions a bouquet from immediately available kitchen items such as lettuce, a spoon, a salami, and the band from Stupino's hat, and presents it to Columbina.

LAZZI OF THE WALTZING LADLE, in which Stupino asks the ladle to dance and they fall in love. Perhaps the ladle has a tragic personal story.

Scene Six: Hotel Kitchen

LAZZI OF ENTERING DRAMATICALLY, in which Capitano rappels in from the flies, strides in from the center aisle, bursts through the fire exit, is announced by trumpeters (possibly himself if he can't get a trumpet helper), etc. This could be repeated for every entrance, with Capitano each time emerging from a new and surprising place.

LAZZI OF BATTLES PAST, in which Capitano demonstrates his battle prowess with a member of the audience, who, of course, scares him into fleeing.

Scene Seven: "Capitano's" Room

LAZZI OF RHYMING ENDEARMENTS, in which Flavio and Flaminia express their love for each other in a series of rhyming couplets, that eventually devolves into a set-up line for a dirty limerick. Note that you don't have to do more than the first, clean, line of the limerick, the audience will laugh at the set-up, knowing you can't say the punchline.

LAZZI OF POSES, in which Flaminia poses repeatedly to get Flavio's attention before he realizes he should say the line, "My beautiful blushing bride..."

Scene Eight: Pantalone's Room

LAZZI OF VEGETABLES, in which Pulcinella compares Brighella favorably to a series of vegetables. "Round and firm like a rutabaga, hair as glossy as a perfect eggplant, skin as smooth and creamy as a summer squash, teeth as white as a daikon radish."

LAZZI OF SANDWICH FILLINGS, in which Pulcinella uses sandwiches to woo Brighella. "I want to wrap you up like melon in prosciutto."

LAZZI OF THE DATE, in which Stupino takes the ladle on a perfect date, creating it from the hotel room at hand – the ice bucket becomes Niagara Falls, the hotel bed a desert crossed by a camel caravan, etc.

LAZZI OF ENDEARMENTS, in which Arlecchino and Columbina call each other by increasingly elaborate pet names. Check foreign languages for endearments such as “mon petit chou” that are funny when translated into English.

LAZZI OF CHAMPAGNE BOTTLES, in which actors who are good jugglers, regardless of which character, juggle and pass clubs that look like champagne bottles, after Arlecchino, Columbina, Pulcinella and Brighella bring in at least six “bottles” from room service.

Scene Nine: Pantalone's Room

LAZZI OF THE MISSING RUBY, in which Pantalone uses his bottom and then his body to feel for the Scarlet Heart that is supposed to be under his mattress. Flavio and Flaminia repeat the identical actions when Pantalone tells them of his loss and they double-check where he left the “baby” last.

LAZZI OF THE MISSING BABY, in which Pantalone describes where he left his “baby” – “I had my baby in my purse, and then I stuck the baby under the mattress” – and Flavio and Flaminia, believing it's a human baby, are appalled and try to teach Pantalone better parenting skills.

LAZZI OF THE LOST BABY, in which Pantalone imagines the life of his “baby,” the Scarlet Heart, as it “grows up.”

LAZZI OF SEARCHING AND FLIRTING, in which Flavio and Flaminia flirt with each other while trying to find the baby, repeating the previous “searching and flirting” lazzi between Columbina/Arlecchino and Brighella/Pulcinella (or Columbina/Arlecchino, and Brighella/Pulcinella) in Scene Eight.

Scene Ten: Hotel Lobby

LAZZI OF ADDING UP, in which Francesca appears as various hotel staff, switching hats to be the bellhop, room service, spa attendant, desk clerk, personal shopper, etc, to demonstrate all the hotel services that were provided to Flavio and Flaminia as Pulcinella adds them to the bill.

LAZZI OF MUSICAL THEATRE, in which Flavio and Flaminia break into song beginning with their line “all you need is love,” segue through a medley of love songs, and end with why they can't pay their bill. References to whatever musical or movie is currently popular would also fit here.

LAZZI OF TUG OF WAR, in which Pantalone intends to give the money bag to Flavio, but his body won't let go of it.

Miscellaneous Lazzi

LAZZI OF OTHER SIDE SIGNS, in which the backs of the scene change signs have humorous text such as “Call Me” or “I Could Have Joined the

Swim Team But No, It Had to Be Drama Club”, or you sell ads to local businesses as a fundraiser.

LAZZI OF SHINING, in which each time the ruby is revealed in its wrappings, a red light glows, a la the Pulp Fiction briefcase.

NAUGHTY BITS

One of the challenges inherent in presenting *commedia dell'arte* with high school students is that commedia is about food, money and sex. Many traditional lazzi are inappropriate for most high school audiences. The Scarlet Heart is a fairly G-rated script – in fact, part of the challenge of writing it was to avoid putting in sexual references that seemed to come naturally to the scenes. If you know your audience can enjoy a more PG-rated play, it can be fun to play with exaggerating the character drives more in this area.

For example, I originally wrote:

PULCINELLA: You two! Watch out for Capitano Botticelli. He's arriving today and we need all the business we can get. (*PULCINELLA fluffs their skirts, aprons and bosoms*) Look cute!

But most high school actors are not going to be comfortable with that action, and most high school audiences are not going to be comfortable watching it. So instead, it's:

PULCINELLA: You two! Watch out for Capitano Botticelli. He's arriving today and we need all the business we can get. (*PULCINELLA fluffs their skirts, aprons and hats*) Look cute!

As you can see, if your actors and audience are up for it, there are elements you can explore in this direction. That said, play to the audience you have, and adapt as needed to respect their sensibilities.



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