

THE CHARACTERS

Pantelone di Bisognosi – a Venetian merchant and banker in his fifties, possibly older; parsimonious and conventional.

Clarice – his daughter, 17, pretty, wants to pursue her own life whatever the wishes of her father.

Dottore Gratiano – an old family friend and professor/practitioner of law, probably from the region around Bologna. He is punctilious about everything and usually incorrect; in his sixties, possibly older.

Silvio – his son of 19, in love with Clarice; he is easily roused to passion or anger and has heroic ideals of life and love.

Brighella – a restaurateur with some shady connections, he could be any age above thirty. He hails from the Venetian suburbs.

Smeraldina – Pantelone's maid, in her twenties, she has been around the block several times and is ready to settle down with someone she loves. She may come from the suburbs or from one of the poorer quarters of Venice.

Truffaldino Battochio – a servant for hire. At the top of the story he serves someone he thinks is Federigo Rasponi from Torino. He is always hungry, seeking comfort, and ready to fall in love. He's from Bergamo.

Beatrice Rasponi – disguised as her dead brother at the top of the play, she is an elegant, educated, and independent woman in her early thirties, possibly younger.

Florindo – in love with (and searching for) Beatrice, he is also from Torino, also in his early thirties. Handsome, dashing, and romantic, he is given to emotional turmoil.

Fachino – a porter, any age, probably from the Veneto.

Cameriere – a waiter, any age, male or female, probably from the Veneto.

Other Waiters – anywhere from one to a dozen other waiters can be included, any age, male or female.

THE SETTING

Various locations in Venice; best staged on a unit set that can quickly accommodate them all.

THE TIME

A fantastical mid-eighteenth century. [*One staging placed the play during Carnevale, which during the mid-eighteenth century really had died out as a particular festival. However, during that time many Venetians wore masks for all social occasions between Christmas and mid-summer, so if you care, masks are justified – and lots of fun.*]

A NOTE

Goldoni uses a literary Italian of his time for Florindo and Beatrice, Silvio and Clarice, something laced with a stuffy sort of Bolognese for il Dottore, and various shadings from the Veneto for everyone else. Using the notion of Venice as New York City, I've tried to capture some of this variety for American audiences. So, the various accents of the Veneto are rendered as Brooklyn, Bronx, Jersey, and so forth. You can, if you like, give il Dottore a Bostonian twinge, and some of the smaller servant roles can be rendered as Northeast Pennsylvanian, or West Virginian. This is pure fancy, but it captures some of the delight of Goldoni's contrasting voices which would otherwise be missing.

I've also left most of the cursing and name calling in Italian, or rendered it in the most colorful Italian I could find when Goldoni's curses seemed to need a bit of musical help. "Briccone", for example, sounds a lot more serious than "rascal", yet the context of its use furnishes sufficient meaning. Some of the standard greetings were also left in the original to help introduce audiences to this convention. While the first couple of times the Italian is spoken may puzzle some, they quickly become accustomed to the mix as their comprehension of the play is not hindered, and may be aided by it. There is a pronunciation guide at the end.

One more thing; Goldoni uses "a se" or "to himself" for lines not delivered to the character being spoken to. The direction (to her/himself) would normally be translated to signal a line delivered to the audience, but can be interpreted as you like. I like the idea of equating an aside with something said to oneself, so I've followed Goldoni's lead on this.