

# COMMEDIA DELIGHT

By Claudia Haas and Richard Cash

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## **STORY OF THE PLAY**

Welcome to Delight, Italy! The once happy village is now a sad town ruled by the cold-hearted, not-so-very-nice Signora Notsobene Pantalone. The townspeople are frightened of the signora (especially when she collects their rent money!), and her spirited daughter, Piccola, feels smothered by her mother's rules.

That is until a ragtag troupe of traveling actors turns everything upside down. The troupe is led by a woman who looks surprisingly like the signora, and with other characters assuming disguises, there's lots of comedic confusion. The colorful troupe leads the citizens of Delight back to their heritage of fun, and long-lost relatives are reunited for a happy ending.

Using *commedia dell'arte* as a base, and flavored with a little of the fable, "Stone Soup," and a little of Shakespeare's "The Comedy of Errors," this play is truly a "Commedia Delight."

Winner of the Columbia Entertainment Company's Jackie White Memorial Playwriting Contest.

### **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(5 m, 10 f, 15 flexible, 1 optional.)*

#### **TOWNSPEOPLE**

MAESTRO (if female, called DIVA) - Frustrated opera singer.

PANE (PAH-nay) (m or f) - An emotional baker.

PESTO - (m) Baker's assistant, a braggart and a pest.

ANISE (A-niece) (f) - Pane's nice niece.

CALZONE (Cal-zo-nay) (m) - Innkeeper, self-important.

STILTON (m) - Calzone's assistant, upright, strong, earnest.

MASCARPONE (m or f) - Calzone's assistant; says everything with a smile.

PROVOLONE (m or f) - Calzone's assistant; a bit sharp.

DOLCI (Dol-tschat) (f) - Owns ristorante; sweet, strong.

GELATO (Jell-a-toe) (m or f) - Dolci's sweet child.

SPUMONI (Spew-mow-knee) (m or f) - Dolci's sweetest child.

BISCOTTI (m or f) - Dolci's assistant. (Optional: lines may be given to Dolci's children.)

SIGNORA INSALATA (f) - Wise, older woman, catalyst of events.

CROSTINI (m or f) - Leader of the orphan gang.

LINGUINI (m or f) - Politest of orphans, bows a lot.

TEENYTORTELLINI (m or f) - Tallest and rudest of orphans.

PORCINI (m or f) - Little wild thing, mischievous, mute.

NOTSOBENE PANTALONE (f) - Means "Not-so-good" in Italian. Wealthy landowner, head of town, controlling and heartless to all but her daughter.

PICCOLA (Peek-oh-la) (f) - N. Pantalone's spirited daughter.

**TROUPE**

ESPRESSO (m or f) - Cunning, kind servant.

BENE PANALONE (f) - Means "good" in Italian. Troupe leader.

PROSCIUTTO (Pro-shoe-toe) (m) - Leading man, totally ham.

DUSE (Doo-say) (f) - Lead actress with big feelings.

NINA (f) - Starlet, a ship that sails in the night.

PINTA (f) - Another starlet, totally clueless.

MARIA (f) - The last starlet, a ship adrift at sea.

GEPETTO (m) - Primo designer, everything is about him.

FELLINI (m or f) - Playwright, rival of Gepetto.

ACTORA (O) (m or f) - Clown, magician.

RUSTICA (O) (m or f) - Clown, magician.

JESTERA (O) (m or f) - Clown, magician.

EXTRA TOWNSFOLK - As desired.

*(NOTE: The actresses playing Bene and Notsobene Pantalone should resemble each other.)*

**PLACE:** Delight, Italy.

**TIME:** 16th century.

**SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**

Scene 1: Piazza of the Italian village.

Scene 2: Later that day.

Scene 3: An hour later.

Scene 4: Almost dusk.

Scene 5: Dusk.

Scene 6: The next morning.

***(Set Description and Props Notes at end of script.)***

### Scene 1

*(AT RISE: Italian piazza in Delight. The TOWNSPEOPLE meekly peek out and start setting up for the business day. Windows are cleaned, doorways are swept. From a high window, SIGNORA INSALATA peers out and observes the action. PANE and ASSISTANTS bring out fresh loaves of bread for the cart. MAESTRO, drawn by the smell of the bread, dramatically moves down the aisle. His heart is full from the aroma! Pane looks alarmed when she sees Maestro for she knows what is to come. But it is too late. The Maestro has smelled and seen the bread.)*

MAESTRO: Ciao, Signora Pane. The bread...ahhh! The bread! It smells delizioso!

PANE: *(Polite, but nervous.)* Grazie, Maestro. We must now continue our work.

MAESTRO: But the bread -- it is so magnifico! I feel, I must...

PANE: *(Getting alarmed.)* NO! Maestro! NO!

MAESTRO: But I must, my heart is full -- I cannot stop it...

PANE: Remember what happened last time!

*(ALL stop and hold their collective breaths.)*

MAESTRO: Yes, I must-a control myself. *(Sighs of relief. PESTO and ANISE set up the wagon with their breads. The MAESTRO draws near and takes a big whiff.)* Pane, dear Pane, I can't control it. It's-a coming...I can feel it -- it's-a coming!

ALL: No, Maestro, no!

*(And with a great operatic flourish and homage to the Pantalone statue, MAESTRO breaks into song. It is to the tune of "O SOLE MIO" and should be sung as in an Italian opera.)*

MAESTRO: *(Sings.)* O Pantalone,  
the baking's-a done;  
when they make-a the money,  
they will give you some.  
O Pantalone,  
the baking's finito;  
you'll find plenty to eat-o  
with your morning cappuccino!

DOLCI: Shhh! Maestro! You know the singing is-a  
forbidden. This is a seriouso town!

CALZONE: Si, Maestro. We earn our living in this town.  
You will get us in trouble with the mean signora.

MAESTRO: *(Sings.)* O Pantalone!  
What a sad state we're in!  
You've taken all our music  
And left an empty din!

*(The MAESTRO starts to sob by the bread wagon. Meanwhile, the "INIs" [CROSTINI, PORCINI, LINGUINI, and TEENYTORTPELLINI] sneak up to the wagon. They are dressed in shabby clothes -- little dirty urchins. As the MUSIC swells, they swipe the rolls from the wagon and run off giggling. The OTHERS watch, pointing, but afraid to make any noise. Maestro begins his song anew even more dramatically -- if that is possible.)*

MAESTRO: Pantalone!  
Do you see what-a you've done?  
Forced our children to steal bread!  
Because of you, they have-a none!

*(ALL nod their heads in agreement and start to cry. From far off the strains of the "TARANTELLA" are heard. All look up. Running onstage are the three clowns from the theatre troupe -- RUSTICO, JESTERA and ACTORA. They are gaily dressed, if a bit ragtag. They carry hoops, and/or balls to juggle, magic tricks. They are followed by the "INIs." In the next exchange, they entertain the town and show the CHILDREN how to play.)*

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