

The Amateur Magician and the Philosopher's Brick

(inspired by *La Mandragola*, by Macchiavelli, 1524, *The Deceived Ones* by Academici Intronati of Siena, 1531, and by *Weird Science*, 1985.)

Written for the 2017 *Pennsic Commedia All-Stars* by Luceta di Cosimo of *IGenesii*, BMDL, Aethelmearc.

Dramatis Personae

Dottore, a learned man and an amateur Magician

Orazio, his son

Clemenzia, his nurse

Vittoria, a prima donna, previously famous, now only vaguely familiar

Isabella, her daughter, who looks exactly like Capitano

Nespolo, a servant to *Vittoria* and *Isabella*

Santina

Bettina

Nina

Columbina

Ricciolina, all actresses in *Vittoria*'s troupe (or are they? See alternative ending for details)

Flaminia, a young widow

Smeraldina, her servant

Capitano, a handsome stranger, who looks exactly like *Isabella*

Properties

A magician's hat

A flask of spirits

Spirit outfits, five

Two similar man's outfits, or at least two identical men's hats.

A brick

Dottore's house

Dottore and *Clemenzia* enter. *Dottore* is wearing a magician's hat and is holding a flask.

Clemenzia pleads with *Dottore* to stop his obsession with magic and alchemy. First, he is wasting the family's fortune, and second, he is *Messing with Things the Man Was Not Meant to Know*. *Dottore* counters that he is the *Man Who Was Meant to Know Everything*, and once he figures out how to summon powerful spirits, and get his hands on the philosopher's stone, he will never want for money ever again. Meanwhile, he found out that *Flaminia*, a young widow who just moved into town, is rich, so he will propose to her and use her fortune instead for the experiments. *Clemenzia* tries to argue with him but he leaves.

Dottore leaves

Orazio enters

Orazio tells *Clemenzia* that he met the most beautiful woman in the piazza today and describes her. *Clemenzia* tells him good women are not encountered in piazzas, and that woman is *Flaminia*, a young rich widow who just moved into town. *Orazio* says that he is in love and is going to woo *Flaminia*. *Clemenzia* tries to tell him that his father is also wooing *Flaminia*, but *Orazio* doesn't listen.

All exit

Flaminia's house

Flaminia and *Smeraldina* enter.

Flaminia complains that the town is boring and after Venice there is just nothing to do here. *Smeraldina* suggests different things, and finally *Flaminia* agrees to go to see a play.

Dottore enters

Dottore explains very logically why *Flaminia* should marry him. *Flaminia* and *Smeraldina* ridicule *Dottore*.

Dottore is very upset that they disrespect a Great Magician like him with, as he commands powerful spirits. *Smeraldina* tells him the only spirits he knows are the distilled ones in his flask, and they command him, as he is clearly drunk if he could even imagine that a woman like *Flaminia* will ever marry him.

Flaminia and *Smeraldina* exit.

Dottore exits.

Theater

Vittoria and the *actresses* enter.

Vittoria complains that the public here is stingy and they are barely recouping production costs. They need to find some alternative way to make money. The *actresses* report on rich people in town, including *Dottore* and *Flaminia*. *Vittoria* is interested in *Dottore*, but he is interested in *Flaminia*. *Vittoria* says *Flaminia* needs a distraction, so she wouldn't even look at *Dottore*. Meanwhile, *Vittoria* needs more information on *Dottore*. Sends the *actresses* to investigate and calls for *Isabella*.

The *actresses* exit.
Isabella enters.

Vittoria explains to *Isabella* that the money is tight, and it's time for *Isabella* to pitch in. *Isabella* is all excited that she will finally have a performing role. *Vittoria* explains that it's exactly what she meant. She needs *Isabella* to dress as a young man and woo *Flaminia*, so it would distract her from *Dottore*. *Isabella* protests. *Vittoria* points out that someone very famous is about to write that the whole world is a stage, so *Isabella* will be making her debut on the world stage, which is even better than the local theater. Otherwise, if *Vittoria* can't get her hands on *Dottore*'s money, *Isabella* will never have a dowry and will never get married. *Isabella* then agrees to her mother's plan.

All exit

City street

Capitano enters

Capitano laments his penniless state. Realize that he has to get a job. *Capitano* decides to go to the local theater and maybe get hired, as he always wanted to be an actor.

Both exit.

Flaminia's house

Isabella in a man's outfit and *Orazio* enter opposite.

Orazio and *Isabella* politely greet each other. *Isabella* really likes *Orazio*, *Orazio* is raving about *Flaminia*. As both find out they are here for *Flaminia*, *Orazio* is upset because he has a rival; *Isabella* is upset because the man she likes is not interested in her and is here to woo a woman she is pretending to like. (But, if *Isabella* doesn't woo *Flaminia* herself, *Flaminia* will marry *Dottore*, her mother will never get *Dottore*'s money and *Isabella* will never have a dowry and marry a man of her dreams, who is clearly *Orazio*, so in order maximize her chances with *Orazio* she must pretend to be his rival! It's so hard to be *Isabella*.)

Smeraldina enters

She dresses down both suitors for being loud, tells them what a delicate sweet creature her mistress is, and asks them a few questions about hypothetical situations. Figures out pretty quickly that *Isabella* is a woman and calls *Flaminia*.

Flaminia enters

Smeraldina, aside to *Flaminia*, explains the situation, and says if *Flaminia* was bored, here is her chance to have fun. *Flaminia* talks to both suitors, and clearly “favors” *Isabella*, to make *Orazio* jealous and *Isabella* uncomfortable. *Isabella* is mortified.

Flaminia and *Smeraldina* exit

Orazio blames *Isabella* for his failed suit

Orazio exits

Isabella laments her fate (so hard to be *Isabella*, etc...).

Isabella exits.

Dottore's House

The *actresses* enter

The *actresses* are dressed as spirits, using their theatrical costumes as disguises.

They enter by breaking and entering, and one of them is carrying a brick. The *actresses* start snooping around.

Dottore and *Clemenzia* enter

The *actresses* hide, dropping the brick.

Dottore is upset by how he was treated by *Flaminia*, *Clemenzia* tells him *Flaminia* is a terrible match for him anyway and tries to explain that his own son was interested in her, so *Dottore* should not pursue *Flaminia* any longer and that *Flaminia* is out of his league. *Dottore* tells her that the scientist/magician of his caliber should not depend on whims of women and will just go make himself one, just like *Flaminia* or even better. He kicks *Clemenzia* out.

Clemenzia exits.

Dottore performs a “summoning spirits ritual”, accidentally discovers the *actresses*, and thinks that the *actresses* are the spirits he summoned and the brick is the philosopher’s stone. He orders the spirits to go forth and bring him a woman of his dreams.

Actresses exit, just as
Vittoria and *Nespola* enter

Nespola tries to introduce *Vittoria* to *Dottore* and impress him. *Dottore* think that the *Nespola* is the woman of his dreams that the spirits got for him, and is very critical of her appearance and demeanor. *Vittoria* takes over and tries to impress *Dottore*, but he finds faults with her as well. They argue. *Vittoria* tries to explains who she is, and *Nespola* yells at *Dottore* for upsetting her mistress, who is a famous prima donna and that many men should be so lucky as him! *Dottore* does not really listen and kicks him out.

Vittoria and *Nespola* exit, just as
Clemenzia enters

Clemenzia is concerned about the commotion. *Dottore* brandishes the brick and tells her that the philosopher’s brick is the real deal, and who needs *Flaminia* anyway. The first batch of women he created wasn’t all that great, but practice makes perfect. *Clemenzia* thinks *Dottore* went mad and runs away.

Both exit opposite

City street

Orazio and *Capitano* enter

Capitano asks *Orazio* how to get to the theater. *Orazio* mistakes *Capitano* for *Isabella* and blames *Capitano* for his misfortune and failure with *Flaminia*. *Capitano* is intrigued by this *Flaminia*, but has no idea what *Orazio* is talking about. *Orazio* is pissed that *Capitano* doesn’t even remember her, and accuses him of being a heartless player who was after *Flaminia* just to upset *Orazio* and challenges him to a duel. *Capitano* is forced to accept. *Capitano* never found out how to get to the theater.

Orazio exits
The *actresses* enter.

They see *Capitano* and mistake him for *Isabella*. They want to know how it went with *Flaminia* and tease him that he looks good in a man’s outfit, and maybe he should always wear it. *Capitano* likes the attention, but doesn’t understand what it’s about. He asks how to get to the theater, but they just think he is joking.

Smeraldina enters

The *actresses* exit (quickly run away because they should not be seen together with *Isabella*)

Smeraldina invites *Capitano* over to *Flaminia*'s house (to continue the joke, as *Smeraldina* still thinks he is disguised *Isabella*.)

Capitano, who heard so much about this mysterious *Flaminia* literally from everyone he meets, accepts the invitation.

All exit.

Flaminia's house

Smeraldina and *Capitano* enter

Flaminia enters opposite

Orazio enters and hides.

Flaminia and *Smeraldina* notice *Orazio*, *Capitano* does not.

Flaminia plays a love scene with *Capitano*, exaggerating, to make *Orazio* jealous. *Capitano* is all for it. *Flaminia* is surprised by *Capitano*'s change in demeanor.

Flaminia and *Capitano* exit (go into the house)

Orazio comes out of hiding and confronts *Smeraldina*, trying to convince her that he is the man for *Flaminia*, and not *Capitano*, who couldn't even remember her name earlier today. *Orazio* in desperation shouts that his dad is a powerful magician, and he'll show them. *Smeraldina* kicks him out.

Orazio exits

Flaminia enters

Flaminia and *Smeraldina* argue. *Flaminia* insists that *Capitano* was clearly a man. She had proof in her own hands. *Smeraldina* disagrees, because it was clearly a woman in the beginning. Both now think that *Isabella* was turned into a man by *Dottore* to make fun of *Flaminia*. Although *Flaminia* thinks it is clearly an improvement, perhaps she should go and apologize to *Dottore*, as she does not want to keep a powerful magician as himself angry. What if he turns *Smeraldina* or *Flaminia* into men too?

Both exit.

City street

LICENSE: This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>. If utilizing this work the author humbly requests a notification. Additionally, commercial licenses are available. Please contact the author at (lucetadicosimo@yahoo.com).

Isabella and *Orazio* enter opposite.

Orazio thinks *Isabella* is here to duel. *Isabella* avoids the duel. *Orazio* complains to *Isabella*.

Essentially, *Orazio* monologues about his passion for *Flaminia*, fickleness of women in general and *Flaminia* in particular, and cruelty of *Isabella*, who would court *Flaminia* even though *Orazio* is madly in love with her, and then forget her name later the same day. From there he gets to *Flaminia* probably forgetting his name later in the day, too, because she is so cruel and fickle. Which means *Isabella* actually did *Orazio* a favor by showing him how fickle *Flaminia* is, and saved *Orazio* from a horrible fate of being used and discarded by *Flaminia*. Which, of course, means, that *Isabella* is a true friend, who sacrificed her (his) own feelings, to save *Orazio's* heart. And friendship is clearly waaaaaay better than passion because it is more constant, and a true friend will do what's best for you, even if you don't know it at the time. During all of this *Isabella* can't even get a word in. She tries to confess to *Orazio* who she really is, but he keeps either interrupting her, or interprets it to fit his own narrative.

Eventually, she just offers *Orazio* a hug. *Orazio* and *Isabella* are now best friends. *Orazio* thinks *Isabella's* show of compassion clearly makes her a better man and offers her help in courting *Flaminia*, because she (*Isabella*) is clearly more worthy, and it is *Flaminia* who now has to prove her worth to *Isabella*. *Isabella* is really torn because a man she likes who tried to kill her minutes earlier is now insisting that she courts the woman he's interested in, but being friend-zoned is clearly better than being dead.

Isabella and *Orazio* exit.

Theater

Capitano enters.

Nespola enters opposite.

Nespola greets *Capitano*, thinks he is *Isabella* in disguise and asks him how it went with *Flaminia* and wants all the details. *Capitano* offers to demonstrate all the details. *Nespola* tells *Capitano* that his (mistaken for *Isabella*) performance has really improved, but he should talk to *Vittoria*.

Vittoria enters.

Vittoria is pissed because *Dottore* insulted her, and she got nowhere. *Capitano* tells her about him wanting to join the troupe. *Vittoria* heard this many times before, so she ignores *Capitano's* request. *Vittoria* tells *Capitano* *Dottore* insulted her, and laments the fact that she has no son to avenge her honor. *Capitano* who thinks this is an audition to

get into this troupe, says (very dramatically) he will be that son and go to *Dottore* and demand an apology.

All exit

City Street

Clemenzia and the *actresses* enter opposite

Clemenzia complains that her charge is lovesick, *Dottore* is mad, and the whole town is full of rumors that the spirits summoned by *Dottore* are running amok turning women into men and vice versa. Notices the *actresses* who are still dressed as spirits, gets nervous that she is turning into a man and tries to run away. The *actresses* annoy her and don't let her leave.

Orazio enters

Orazio chases away the spirits

Actresses exit

Clemenzia explains to *Orazio* what's going on. *Orazio*, who had seen the spirits himself believes her. *Orazio* is overjoyed that his father's experiments had finally worked and that it will answer ALL of their problems. *Clemenzia* thinks *Orazio* is mad, too.

Clemenzia exits.

Capitano enters.

Orazio greets him very warmly, (gives him a hug) *Capitano* is a bit surprised by the change in *Orazio*. *Capitano* asks *Orazio* how to get to *Dottore*'s house. *Orazio* tells him he was just looking for *Capitano* to invite him to *Dottore*'s house.

Both exit

Theater

Isabella and *Nespola* enter opposite

Nespola and *Isabella* argue. *Nespola* heard the rumors about men turning into women and is now suspicious, (as *Capitano* was very amorous with *Nespola* earlier) wants to know if *Isabella* is a man.

Vittoria enters

Vittoria is upset that *Isabella* didn't get the apology from *Dottore*. *Isabella* tells her she is in love with *Orazio*. *Vittoria* realizes that it's her chance to get to *Dottore*'s money, via *Isabella* marrying *Orazio*, and will go and bring that suit. *Nespola* also suggests that perhaps they would be better off turning *Isabella* into a man, so she can marry *Flaminia*. *Vittoria* says that either way they have to go to *Dottore*.

Vittoria and *Nespola* leave

Isabella goes after them

***Dottore*'s house (this is the last 'marriage' scene. To decompress the stage the couples may leave as they pair off, or just move to the side, up to you)**

Dottore enters

Smeraldina and *Flaminia* enter

Dottore thinks he summoned/made them with the power of the brick. He is not so impressed with *Smeraldina*, but likes *Flaminia* because she looks just like *Flaminia*.

Orazio and *Capitano* enter.

Orazio tells *Dottore* that his love for *Flaminia* was a childish crush, and he finally met someone who understands him completely, has his best interests in mind, and sacrificed his own heart just earlier today to save *Orazio*'s, and to show him how shallow and fickle *Flaminia* is. Now *Orazio* is willing to spend the rest of his life with this person, he just inconveniently happens to be a man, so would *Dottore* please turn him into a woman for *Orazio*, using the power of the spirits and the philosophers brick?

Capitano: "WTF!?!"

Flaminia interjects that if *Dottore* turns this fine young man back into a woman, *Flaminia* will turn *Dottore* into a woman without any magic.

Flaminia and *Orazio* fight over *Capitano*.

Vittoria and *Nespola* enter.

They are surprised to find that *Capitano* (who they mistake for cross-dressed *Isabella*) is already there. *Nespola* who is now suspicious, checks out *Capitano* and reports to *Vittoria* that the rumors are true and her daughter is now a son.

Isabella enters.

Everybody is confused by the doubles. Apparently, *Capitano* is *Vittoria*'s long lost son and *Isabella*'s twin brother. *Vittoria* delivered twins, while they were on the road travelling with the troupe between cities, but *Nespolo* lost one because she can't count.

Orazio is overjoyed that *Isabella* is actually a woman and he and *Isabella* pair off. *Flaminia* is overjoyed that *Capitano* was, is, and will remain a man, and *Capitano* and *Flaminia* pair off.

Clemenzia and the *actresses* enter

The *actresses* dressed as spirits are still pursuing and annoying *Clemenzia*, *Vittoria* tells them to knock it off, and they stop.

Dottore is upset that he is not actually a magician, but *Vittoria* tells him that as she is an actress, she can be any woman *Dottore* wants, no magic required. They pair off.

Smeraldina and *Nespolo* are just happy that craziness is over, *Smeraldina* will teach *Nespolo* to count to two, so she will never lose track of *Vittoria*'s children again.

The *actresses* take off their disguises, *Clemenzia* realizes they are not spirits and is relieved. *Clemenzia*, her charge now happy and set up to be married, decides to join the theater, and leaves with the *actresses*.

ALTERNATE ENDING:

You may consider the following:

FOUR *actresses* leave the theater, and FIVE spirits appear at *Dottore*'s house, and throughout the play. During the last scene, when the *actresses* take off their spirits disguises, only FOUR are the actresses, and ONE remains as a *spirit*. The characters realize that the *spirit* is real, and run away. The *spirit* remains on stage and summons them back for the curtain call with the power of the philosopher's brick. When at the end the *spirit* removes the disguise, it can be anybody you want, including *Arlicchino/Pedrolino*.

FIN.