

One Servant, Two Masters

TRUFFALDINO (The Servant)	Male or female	Young/energetic	Essential that the actor has zest, boundless energy, willingness to “put themselves out there”, including interaction with the audience – 4 th -wall breaking. Cheeky, irrepressible, lovable rogue. Written as a male, but I am prepared to see this part played by a female, either as a female character (Truffaldina), or simply gender-blind, in male costume
PANTALONE (Clarice’s father – or mother)	Probably male, could be female	Older generation	Pompous, stuffy, ridiculous. Obsessed with money. May be played with physical defect – ear trumpet? – very thick glasses? Needs to be old enough to plausibly be Clarice’s father/mother, so possibly 40’s but better if older. The part could be re-written as Clarice’s mother
DR LOMBARDI (also Porter) (Silvio’s father – or mother)	Probably male, could be female	Older generation	Also pompous, stuffy, ridiculous. A lawyer (but off-duty). Thinks himself very clever, speaks Latin. Physically defective – gouty foot? Needs to be old enough to plausibly be Silvio’s father/mother, so possibly 40’s but better if older. The part could be re-written as Silvio’s mother. Actor will need to double as one of the porters, involving physical comedy, carrying and spilling large quantities of luggage.
CLARICE (Pronounced Clar- <u>ee</u> -chay)	Female	Younger generation. Pantalone’s daughter	Attractive, fashionable. Loves Silvio. Young (teens – mid twenties in appearance). Given to melodramatic and not very realistic speech.

SILVIO (also Waiter 1)	Male	Dr Lombardi's son. Age-appropriate to be in love with Clarice.	Attractive, fashionable. Foppish – fancies himself. Preens himself, aware of good looks. Hot headed – ready to quarrel and fight, but also a coward and useless fighter. Also given to melodramatic and not very realistic speech. Actor will need to double as a waiter.
BEATRICE (Pronounced Bay-a- <u>tree</u> -chay)	Female	More mature than Clarice, but still younger generation	In male disguise throughout. Confident, capable. Pivotal role – reveals her identity to some characters, not others. Reasonably wealthy. Asserts social superiority and dominance over Truffaldino.
FLORINDO	Male	Age-appropriate to be in love with Beatrice	Needs to be mistaken for Beatrice, so physically broadly similar, age broadly similar. Also reasonably wealthy. Also asserts social superiority and dominance over Truffaldino.
SMERALDINA (Pantalone's and Clarice's maidservant)	Female	Young, but probably older than Clarice. Energetic/feisty	Maidservant. Attractive. Uneducated. Feisty and energetic. Makes a “sweet” match with the equally uneducated Truffaldino, and willing to go along with his deceptions and tricks
BRIGHELLA (also Waiter 2)	Male or female	Mature	Innkeeper, and Beatrice's confidante. Capable and self-assured. Actor will need to double as a waiter.
NOTARY (also Busker)	Male or female	Any age	Notary role has only one line. But ideally, this actor will be a musician who plays the non-speaking Busker, on stage in all outdoor scenes, and playing a few seconds of music between scenes. Guitar or accordion

General audition notes

It will be helpful if you read my separate notes on the background of the play as a whole, to see that many of these characters, derived from the “Commedia” tradition, are not expected to be totally believable, but are stock characters who speak and behave as historical audiences would have expected them to. (Think of modern pantomimes and the traditions of the principal boy, the dame etc). Some of the dialogue appears stilted, or excessively formal, or melodramatic - -this is to be welcomed and exploited!

The key note is FUN. There is absolutely nothing about the play which is to be taken seriously. It delivers no lessons, or moral guidance, and it does not encourage audiences to reflect on anything at all deep, improving or philosophical. Nor does it really shine any light on our present-day situations. There are no villains, but there are plenty of human weaknesses. The “hero” – the eponymous servant – is characterised mainly by his cunning, quick-wittedness, ability to lie, slightly lecherous behaviour, and obsession with his own stomach. As such, he is a direct descendant of Harlequin (in Commedia dell’Arte).

The fantasy-like feel of the play means that I am quite prepared to mix genders, for example by making the parents mothers instead of fathers. It will all depend on strengths shown at audition. In particular, Truffaldino, written as a male part, I am prepared to have played by a female. If so, we will explore in rehearsal whether to make the character a female, or simply dress the actress in male clothes (which, anyway, the key character of Beatrice does throughout the play!)

The success of the play will be partly dependent on the audience falling in love with Truffaldino, despite his faults. IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT, IF YOU WANT TO, YOU SHOULD PUT YOURSELF FORWARD TO AUDITION FOR TRUFFALDINO – MALE OR FEMALE. Nobody should be shy of trying out for this role – it is an absolute dream of a part (and although it probably has the most lines, it is actually not a huge burden – there are several scenes where he does not appear at all.) The two parents also offer great scope for fun and nonsense.

The other roles, apart from the Notary/Busker, are all reasonably substantial and should be enjoyable. The table above gives some idea of ideal ages, but there is plenty of room for flexibility.

Accent and pronunciations – from the very outset I want us to be immersed in “Italian-ness”. All place names are as known by Italians (eg Venezia and Firenze, not Venice or Florence) and we will need to become familiar and comfortable with the pronunciation of these, and of characters’ Italian names: Beatrice is “Bay-a-tree-chay”, and Clarice is “Clar-ee-chay”. I want all Italian names and place names to be pronounced with a slightly overdone Italian love of the sound of their vowels, partly for comic effect. The script also contains very occasional uses of “sì”, “grazie”, “arrivederci” – again, pronunciations to be relished. Obviously, we will discuss this during the audition meetings. I am also hopeful that we might end the play with a rousing rendition of a well-known aria, to be sung in Italian... but don’t let this put you off! Non-singers can mime!

Martin