

THE FEIGNED FENCING MASTERS

Adapted by Dale Anthony Girard

(Based, in part, on dialogue from *The Feigned Courtesans*, by Aphra Behn)

Characters (2 Men):

ROCCO BENETTI (An Italian Fencing Master)

CHARLES BESNARD (A French Fencing Master)

ROCCO

I see'a, Signor Besnard, that you did'a receive and accept'a the challenge. Today we'a settle all and for once, who is the true'a Maestro of the Art of Fencing.

CHARLES

Hum---hum---Mr. Monsieur Benetti; for although your reputation proceeds you, "the very butcher of a silk button," la! "One, two, and de third in your bosom," fu-fu-fu! I know dat I am de true Master at Arms – for I have fenced men more dan buttons! So run while you can, or prepare to face de fleuret of Maitre d'arms, Charles Besnard!

ROCCO

Pah! Your frog-sticking French fleuret could poke'a me through two or four times and do no damage at all. It is meself, and the espada of Italy that shall'a settle this contest.

CHARLES

Dat, sir? Ha, ha, dat be nothing but de spatula of Spain.

ROCCO

The espada is Italian, Signor, what'a should it be else?

CHARLES

It should be de fleuret, de French single-rapier.

ROCCO

Single rapier with'a vengeance, there's a weapon for a gentleman indeed!

CHARLES

What will you have for de gentleman, de espada, de Italian cudgel for de gentleman?

ROCCO

Ay, Signor, the Italian espada! And I do have'a it here for you rascally Frenchman, who come to abuse persons of quality with'a your paltry single-rapier. Single rapier, ha! Come'a your ways, Signor, and, with'a your single rapier, choose what guard you like'a the best?

CHARLES

Monsieur. Eder de *quart* or de *tierce*, dey be both French; den for my *parades*, *degagements*, my *advancements*, my *elongements*, and *retirements*. Dey be all de same – French.

ROCCO

Cart and horse, what'a new-found inventions and words have'a we here? Signor, I would know whether it is your intent to'a kill me with your ridiculous language or'a bore me to death with your endless chatter?

THE FEIGNED FENCING MASTERS

CHARLES

Alors, monsieur, mettez-vous en garde!

ROCCO

Ha-ha! Now'a we shall see a fencing frog! Well, Signor, come'a your ways; put'a yourself in your cart and your horse as you call it, and I'll'a show you the difference. *(they fight)*

CHARLES

La! Look you, Mr. Monsieur, my buttons are all intact! Perhaps if you set your right foot more forward, and turned your hand up dus: dat be de *quart*. Or, turned it dus: and dat be de *tierce*.

ROCCO

Hocus-pocus, Hicksius-doxius; here be'a the cart and here be'a the horse! Why, what's all'a this for, ha, Signor; and where's your *guardia*, your *contra postura*, all this while? Come, come, Signor, I must'a instruct you, I see. Come'a your ways, sir. *(they fight)*

CHARLES

A tande, a tande um pew: you Italians cannot even trust de right hand and de right leg forward together.

ROCCO

Aye, marry Signor, 'twas a *punto reverso* – and a good one indeed! 'Tis my *botta secretta!*

CHARLES

And yet, Mr. Monsieur, here I stand, your secret unfurled, and my body and buttons still unscathed! You, monsieur, are no butcher of de buttons – you are nothing but a false, fake, feigned fencing fool!

ROCCO

How dare you, Signor! You have'a slandered my name and reputation in one'a swell foop! I have'a to you been polite, out'a respect of what little the French have'a brought to the science of'a fence – but'a no more! Now it is to the death! Have at thee you fanciful, foppish, fat-headed, fencing frog! *(Rocco charges, they fight and Charles is disarmed and run through)*

CHARLES

Ah, *morbleu*, I have been trust true de button. Pox on your Italian espada.

ROCCO

Ha, Signor? Where be'a your carts and your'a horse now? And your'a single rapier, Signor, ha?

CHARLES

Ah, Mr. Monsieur, will you now kill me?

ROCCO

Good'a Lord, no – I'm not'a a murderer, or a Spaniard. I'm a gentleman. Honor, Signor, has'a been satisfied. Rocco Benetti, and the Italian espada, they take'a the day. I am the true'a Maestro of the Art of Fencing. Ciao – oh, and I'll fetch'a you a surgeon.

CHARLES

You are to kind, Mr. Monsieur. You are to kind.