

## Volpone (3 – 26 August)

### AUDITION SIDES

Refer to [arberyproductions.co.uk/auditions.htm](http://arberyproductions.co.uk/auditions.htm) for details of auditions.

This adaptation of the classic comedy is set in 19th century Venice and the language updated to suggest that period. Liberties have also been taken to include women in roles (lawyers, judges) that are not true to the time. The style of the play is classic comedy with elements of farce – words are important and must be enunciated clearly; facial expressions and intonation should be exaggerated, but not too much; and physicality – how characters move their bodies – is also important. All these will be worked on in rehearsal, but we would like to see your interpretation of these characters clearly in audition. If you are invited to the callback, which will include different scenes, we may give you suggestions as to how to develop the role further.

(The parts of VOLPONE and MOSCA have been cast from the 2017 previous production.)

#### MALE

CORVINO	35+	pp 2 – 3
SIR POLITIC WOULD-BE <i>and</i> NOTARY	40+	pp 4 – 5
PEREGRINE <i>and</i> BONARIO	early 20s	pp 6 – 8

#### FEMALE

CORBACCIA	old	pp 9 – 10
LADY WOULD-BE	40+	pp 11 – 13
CELIA <i>and</i> MAIDSERVANT	20s	pp 14

#### EITHER SEX

VOLTRE	40s	pp 15 – 16
3 JUDGES <i>and</i> JESTERS	30s – 60s	pp 17 – 19
OFFICER <i>and</i> JESTER	any age	pp 20 - 21

**CORVINO AUDITION SIDES**

appears in 8 of 12 scenes

Corvino is in his 30s, a fashionable merchant, a smooth talker in public and hot-tempered with his wife in private - his hot temper masking his impotence and probably repressed homosexuality. Wealth and status is his goal.

(a) SCENE 1 with MOSCA and VOLPONE

MOSCA (*cont*) Signior Corvino. You are most welcome. The hour has come, sir.

CORVINO He is dead?

MOSCA As good as. He knows no-one.

CORVINO What will I do?

MOSCA Sir?

CORVINO I have brought a pearl.

MOSCA Perhaps he will remember you, sir. Is your pearl from the Orient?

CORVINO Venice has seen nothing like it.

VOLPONE (*very weak*) Signior Corvino.

MOSCA He speaks . . .

VOLPONE Signior Corvino!

MOSCA He calls you. He is here, sir, and he has brought a large pearl.

CORVINO How are you, sir?

MOSCA He cannot hear you, but it comforts him to see you.

CORVINO Say I have a diamond for him too.

MOSCA Best put it in his hand, sir. Only there has he feeling. See him grasp it!

CORVINO Alas, how pitiful a sight!

MOSCA Sir, an heir's tears may cover laughter.

CORVINO His heir?

MOSCA When I took pen and paper and asked who should be his heir, "Corvino" he said. Executor? Again "Corvino". Upon which I sent home the others, heir to nothing but tears and curses.

CORVINO Oh my dear Mosca! A sudden thought, has he children?

MOSCA A dozen or more bastards with gypsies and vagabonds when he was drunk. But he has given them nothing.

CORVINO Does he hear us?

MOSCA Not a word. You could discharge a pistol in his ear; he would not hear it.

CORVINO His nose is like a running sewer.

MOSCA Very good, sir. Speak up! His mouth?

CORVINO Exudes the stench of hell.

MOSCA We should stop it up.

CORVINO Not I.

MOSCA Then let me. I could stifle him with a pillow.

CORVINO Do as you will but after I go.

MOSCA Go now. It is your presence makes him last so long.

CORVINO I beg you, use no violence.  
MOSCA Why not, sir?  
CORVINO Well, at your discretion.  
MOSCA As you say, sir. Farewell.  
CORVINO I will not trouble him with my pearl.  
MOSCA No? Why this sudden concern? Is not everything here yours? Am I not your servant, here to protect it? Do I not owe my life to you?  
CORVINO Indeed, Mosca, my friend. You shall share in all my fortune.

(b) SCENE 6 with Celia

CORVINO No, you must go. I have decided. It must be done.  
CELIA Husband, I beg you, please do not test me. If you doubt my honour, lock me up. I will live alone in a darkened room if that pleases you.  
CORVINO That is not my wish. Go to him, obey me, I am your husband.  
CELIA Heaven protect me!  
CORVINO Go! You have heard my reasons. His doctors' orders. His will. The debts I owe. If you are my loyal wife, respect me. Do as I say.  
CELIA But what of honour!  
CORVINO Honour? Tut! A word. An illusion invented to awe fools. Is my gold harmed when handled? Do my clothes fall apart when looked upon? This is no different. He is an old, decrepit wretch who barely sees or hears and depends upon his servant to feed him. Almost paralysed. What harm can he do you? As for your reputation, I will not shout the news in San Marco. No-one knows but the patient, who is nearly dead, and the servant, whose silence I have bought.  
CELIA But, my husband, remember how the saints hate all sin.  
CORVINO If I thought it were a sin I would not urge you. If this poor man were a young Frenchman or a hot-blooded Tuscan who had studied Casanova and knew every trick in lechery, if I forced you upon such a man, that would be a sin, but this is medicine. Besides, it assures my inheritance.

**SIR POLITIC WOULD -BE and NOTARY AUDITION SIDES**

appears in 5 of 12 scenes

Sir Politic is an eccentric Englishman who has married, for money, the overbearing Lady Would-Be. His eccentricities can be in speech, behaviour, costume etc but should not be too extreme. The notary is an official whose task is to keep the court record. (Notary scenes in callback.)

**(a) SCENE 1 with PEREGRINE**

**SIR POLITIC** Sir, to a wise man all the world is home. Not Italy, nor France nor Europe can bind me if destiny calls. Yet, it is not the urge to travel nor unhappiness with England that brings me here but my wife's desire to visit Venice, observe the people, learn the language and so forth. Tell me, sir, how long since you left Albion?

**PEREGRINE** Seven weeks, sir. And your name, sir?

**SIR POLITIC** I am Politic Would-Be, a somewhat poor knight.

**PEREGRINE** Your wife must be the fine Lady Would-Be, in Venice to see the latest fashions among the ladies of leisure here.

**SIR POLITIC** It is true that spiders and butterflies may visit the same flower.

**PEREGRINE** My good sir, I did not know you and beg your pardon. You are well-known and, I hear, know everything.

**SIR POLITIC** Not everything, sir. I have some ideas. I observe and take notes. And although not in Parliament or diplomatic service, I see the affairs of state, and record for private enjoyment the ebb and flow of other men's fortunes.

**PEREGRINE** I thank the Fates for bringing us together. Your great knowledge - if freely given - could help me greatly. I have little experience of travel and etiquette.

**SIR POLITIC** You have no guidebook?

**PEREGRINE** A simple one, sir, with a few Italian phrases.

**SIR POLITIC** This is it? Such books do nothing but create pedants, all appearance and no substance. You appear to be a gentleman. It is not my boast, but it has been my fate at times to be consulted by those of high estate, sons of men of reknown, persons of blood, of honour, of . . .

**(b) SCENE 7 with Peregrine and Lady Would-Be (who is under the impression that Peregrine is a female prostitute)**

**SIR POLITIC** My lady! You shall meet her. If she were not my wife, she would be a lady of such merit, fashion, behaviour and beauty . . .

**PEREGRINE** You do well to praise her.

**SIR POLITIC** . . . and conversation.

**PEREGRINE** Being your wife, she has a good example.

**SIR POLITIC** Madam, here is a gentleman acquaintance. He appears a youth, but he is . . .

**LADY WD-BE** . . . none.

**SIR POLITIC** He has recently come into society.

**LADY WD-BE** How recently? Today? Is this "his" habit? Well, Sir Would-Be, I am surprised. I thought your honour would be more precious to you than to besmirch it thus. A man of your gravity and rank! But some knights care little for the promises they make to ladies - particularly the ones they marry.

SIR POLITIC     **By the spurs of my knighthood . . . !**

LADY WD-BE     By any spurs. (*to PEREGRINE*) “Sir”, a word with you. I would not quarrel or be violent with any gentlewoman. All behaviour that reminds me of peasants makes me shudder. No lady should wrong another of her sex no matter what she wears. In my poor judgement it is a solecism in our sex, if not in manners.

PEREGRINE     I do not understand.

SIR POLITIC     **Dear wife, explain yourself.**

LADY WD-BE     Indeed I will sir, since you provoke me with your impudence and the laughter of your . . . siren . . . your catamite . . .

PEREGRINE     What fury is this? What hysteria?

SIR POLITIC     **This gentleman is of noble birth and one of us.**

LADY WD-BE     One of them, more like. Come, you embarrass me, Sir Politic. It shames me that you are not ashamed to be the lord of a lewd harlot, a common whore, a female devil in male disguise.

SIR POLITIC (*to PEREGRINE*)     **A female devil? If that you are, I must bid farewell to your delights and let my wife entertain you.**

Both Peregrine and Bonario are fashionable young men, which makes it important to distinguish between them both in appearance (costume) and style (mannerisms, voice etc). Peregrine is the wealthy young English (must be English) tourist on the Grand Tour; he enjoys life and teasing other people. Bonario has a greater sense of self-importance. Whereas Peregrine has fun, Bonario takes life much more seriously – the former likes meeting other people; to the latter other people are a nuisance. Peregrine has relatively few lines but his presence on stage is important – as are his reactions to the absurdities of Sir Politic and his wife Lady Would-Be.

**(a) SCENE 2 with SIR POLITIC**

SIR POLITIC Sir, to a wise man all the world is home. Not Italy, nor France nor Europe can bind me if destiny calls. Yet, it is not the urge to travel nor unhappiness with England that brings me here but my wife's desire to visit Venice, observe the people, learn the language and so forth. Tell me, sir, how long since you left Albion?

PEREGRINE Seven weeks, sir. And your name, sir?

SIR POLITIC I am Politic Would-Be, a somewhat poor knight.

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LADY WD-BE . . . none.

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LADY WD-BE How recently? Today? Is this "his" habit? Well, Sir Would-Be, I am surprised. I thought your honour would be more precious to you than to besmirch it thus. A man of your gravity and rank! But some knights care little for the promises they make to ladies - particularly the ones they marry.

SIR POLITIC By the spurs of my knighthood . . . !

LADY WD-BE By any spurs. (to PEREGRINE) "Sir", a word with you. I would not quarrel or be violent with any gentlewoman. All behaviour that reminds me of peasants makes me shudder. No lady should wrong another of her sex no matter what she wears. In my poor judgement it is a solecism in our sex, if not in manners.

PEREGRINE I do not understand.

SIR POLITIC Dear wife, explain yourself.

LADY WD-BE Indeed I will sir, since you provoke me with your impudence and the laughter of your . . . siren . . . your catamite . . .

PEREGRINE What fury is this? What hysteria?

SIR POLITIC This gentleman is of noble birth and one of us.

LADY WD-BE One of them, more like. Come, you embarrass me, Sir Politic. It shames me that you are not ashamed to be the lord of a lewd harlot, a common whore, a female devil in male disguise.

SIR POLITIC (to PEREGRINE) A female devil? If that you are, I must bid farewell to your delights and let my wife entertain you.

*Exit SIR POLITIC*

LADY WD-BE Oh, you may wear a face of innocence but your concubine will hear what I have to say!

PEREGRINE This is a fine state of affairs. Do you always behave like this? Practise your insults when the opportunity arises?

LADY WD-BE Enough, "sir".

PEREGRINE Madam, if your husband sent you to buy a shirt or to invite me to your home, there are easier ways by far of gaining my attention.

LADY WD-BE You are in my trap. I will not let you go.

PEREGRINE Why am I in it? Why should I want to go? Your husband said you were fair. So you are, except your nose, on the side that catches the sun, is somewhat red and your hair . . .

LADY WD-BE Such brazenness cannot be endured.

(c) SCENE 5 with MOSCA

MOSCA Who's this? Bonario, son of that hag Corbaccia. A new plan comes to me. Good day, good sir.

BONARIO You speak to me? I do not wish to speak to you.

MOSCA Sir, do not scorn my poverty.

BONARIO I scorn only your villainy.  
MOSCA My villainy!  
BONARIO You do no work but merely flatter and feed from another's kitchen.  
MOSCA Sir, it is easy to malign a poor woman's virtue. You are a gentleman and your words may be true, yet to condemn one whom you do not truly know is inhuman.  
BONARIO (*aside*) Tears! Perhaps I was too harsh.  
MOSCA 'Tis true that through necessity I must flatter if I am to eat. But I must deny that I have destroyed friendships, divided families, betrayed secrets, whispered lies, offered false praise or corrupted chastity. If I cannot somehow redeem my reputation, let me die now and Heaven judge me.  
BONARIO This can only be sincerity. I am to blame for misjudging you. Pray, forgive and tell me your business.  
MOSCA Sir, it concerns you, and though I may betray my master, I cannot see injustice done. This very hour your mother will disinherit you.  
BONARIO What!  
MOSCA I speak the truth, sir. Believe me I have no interest in this affair except a devotion to goodness and virtue, which, I hear, overflow in you.  
BONARIO You lie. My mother could not be so cruel.  
MOSCA Your disbelief is natural, given your good nature and your innocence - which makes the wrong more monstrous and hateful. But, sir, if you come with me, I'll take you to a place where you can witness the deed and hear yourself named ... bastard.  
BONARIO You astound me!  
MOSCA Sir, if I am wrong, then strike me and call me villain. But you are wronged and I suffer for you. My heart weeps blood in anguish . . .  
BONARIO Enough! I'll go. I wish to see the truth.  
MOSCA I fear you'll be unhappy, good fair youth.

**CORBACCIA AUDITION SIDES**

appears in 6 of 12 scenes

Corbaccia is old (exact age uncertain; she has a son, Bonario, in his 20s who could be adopted) and deaf. Her primary characteristics are greed and mistrust of the world around her.

(a) SCENE 1 with MOSCA and VOLPONE (1 line)

MOSCA (*cont*) Madame Corbaccia! You are most welcome.

CORBACCIA How is your patron?

MOSCA In truth, no better.

CORBACCIA What! He's better?

MOSCA No, madam. He's much worse.

CORBACCIA Ah, good. Where is he?

MOSCA In bed, comatose.

CORBACCIA What's wrong with his toes?

MOSCA Nothing, madam.

CORBACCIA Does he sleep well?

MOSCA Not a wink last night.

CORBACCIA He should take some medicine. I have brought a powder here, from my own doctor.

MOSCA He abhors drugs.

CORBACCIA It will only make him sleep.

VOLPONE (*aside*) My last sleep if I took it.

MOSCA Alas, he has no faith in medicine, thinks doctors more dangerous than disease. He often says physicians will never be his heir.

CORBACCIA Does he still have fits?

MOSCA Most violent, madam. (*VOLPONE has a sudden fit; MOSCA looks at him ironically*) His speech is broken, his eyes fixed, his face drawn long . . .

CORBACCIA He grows strong?

MOSCA His face drawn long, with gaping mouth.

CORBACCIA Oh, good.

MOSCA His joints are stiff and numb, his flesh the colour of lead.

CORBACCIA Good indeed. Is he aware?

MOSCA Madam, he has lost all feeling. His breath is almost imperceptible.

CORBACCIA Excellent! I shall outlast him. I feel younger by twenty years. But why was the lawyer here?

MOSCA He smelled a corpse and heard my master would make his will.

CORBACCIA Indeed?

MOSCA He brought a silver plate.

CORBACCIA To be your master's heir?

MOSCA I do not know, madam.

CORBACCIA I will prevent it yet. Here, I have brought a bag of ducats much heavier than his plate.

MOSCA This is true medicine. It will restore him. As soon as he comes to his senses, I

will beg him to make his will and show him this to seal the deed.

CORBACCIA He squeals? He bleeds?

MOSCA No, madam. To seal the deed. But first, I advise you to hurry home, write your will and make my master your sole heir.

CORBACCIA And disinherit Bonario, my son!

MOSCA That will make it much more sincere. When I tell my master of your many gifts, and then produce your will, in which, without regard for your brave and well-deserving son, your love for my master makes him your heir, then . . .

CORBACCIA . . . he must make me his heir?!

MOSCA Indeed, madam. You will surely outlive him, being so healthy and strong.

CORBACCIA That I am. A fine plan indeed. I must go and prepare the will.

MOSCA Fare well, madam.

CORBACCIA I will be like a mother to you.

MOSCA (*aside*) Who robs her son of his blessing.

CORBACCIA What's that?

MOSCA Give your son God's blessing.

CORBACCIA I feel young again.

MOSCA Madam is a precious ass.

CORBACCIA What's that?

MOSCA Madam will be late for Mass.

CORBACCIA I go, I go.

(b) SCENE 8 1st court scene, with Mosca

CORBACCIA Good Mosca!

MOSCA Your business, madam?

CORBACCIA What? You have business?

MOSCA I attend to your business, madam.

CORBACCIA No-one else's?

MOSCA No, madam.

CORBACCIA Then be about it.

MOSCA At once, madam.

CORBACCIA Take an inventory. Put it all in. Jewels, gold, cash, bedding, curtains.

MOSCA The advocate's fee must be deducted.

CORBACCIA I'll pay him now. You'll give too much.

MOSCA Madam, it must be me.

CORBACCIA Two ducats will suffice?

MOSCA Six, madam.

CORBACCIA Too much.

MOSCA He talked a lot. You must consider that.

CORBACCIA There's three. And that's for you.

MOSCA A copper? The bag of bones gives but a bone.

**LADY WOULD-BE AUDITION SIDES**

appears in 5 of 12 scenes

Lady Would-Be, the rich wife of Sir Politic Would-Be, is overbearing, vain, man-hunting, oblivious of others – think Hyacinth Bucket on steroids, or a similar character.

(a) SCENE 6 with VOLPONE sick in bed

VOLPONE *(aside)* Here comes the storm.

LADY WD-BE How is my brave Volpone?

VOLPONE Troubled with noise. I cannot sleep. I dreamt that a strange fury entered my house and spoke so loud that my roof was blown away.

LADY WD-BE I too had a fearful dream, if I could but remember it.

VOLPONE *(aside)* Damnation. Now she will tell me it.

LADY WD-BE It seemed a rainbow, bright and delicate . . .

VOLPONE Madam, if you will, no more. I sweat and suffer at the mention of any dream. See how I tremble.

LADY WD-BE Poor soul! What you need now to stimulate the heart is crushed pearl in syrup of apples and tincture of gold. Add lemon, bitter plums . . .

VOLPONE *(aside)* She is in full flight!

LADY WD-BE . . . essence of amber. Of course you have muscadel wine.

VOLPONE Will you take a glass and leave?

LADY WD-BE Saffron - it must be English - half a dram. Sixteen cloves, a little musk, dried mint, barley . . .

VOLPONE *(aside)* She will not stop. Once I feigned illness, now I truly suffer.

LADY WD-BE Apply with a scarlet cloth.

VOLPONE *(aside)* A never-ending torrent.

LADY WD-BE Shall I make you a poultice?

VOLPONE No, no, no. I feel much better now.

LADY WD-BE I have studied a little medicine, but now I have a passion for music, except in the forenoon when I must spend an hour or two in painting. A lady should practise all the arts. Good conversation, knowledge of literature, a talent to write but above all, as Plato tells us, music. Pythagoras too, I believe, says the same. With face and clothes, our voice is woman's greatest ornament.

VOLPONE The poet says the highest female grace is silence.

LADY WD-BE Which poet? Petrarch, Tasso or Dante? Guarini? Ariosto? Aretine? I have read them all.

VOLPONE *(aside)* Is there no escape?

LADY WD-BE I think I have some of them with me.

VOLPONE *(aside)* The sun and tides will cease before her tongue falls quiet. I am doomed.

LADY WD-BE Here is *The Faithful Shepherd*. Our English writers often steal from this author. Petrarch is more passionate. Dante is hard. For wit there's Aretine, although his pictures are not for polite company. You are not paying attention.

VOLPONE Alas, my mind is disturbed.

LADY WD-BE In that case, we must turn to philosophy.

VOLPONE Oh, God!

LADY WD-BE When passions overcome us we must respond with reason. In affairs of state nothing is more prejudicial than coming to a decision and sticking to it. Incorporating outward things into our mentality can stop the organs and, as Plato says, assassinate our knowledge.

VOLPONE *(aside)* Grant me patience!

LADY WD-BE I really should visit you more often to bring you back to health.

VOLPONE *(aside)* I do not deserve this!

LADY WD-BE Only one man in the world understood me so well that he would lie for hours listening to me speak. Like you his comments were not always to the point. I'll keep talking, sir, long enough that you might sleep. *(she sits on Volpone's bed and makes to caress him)*

VOLPONE Some power, some fate, some fortune rescue me!

(b) SCENE 7 with Sir Politic and Peregrine (Lady Would-Be is under the impression that Peregrine is a female prostitute)

SIR POLITIC My lady! You shall meet her. If she were not my wife, she would be a lady of such merit, fashion, behaviour and beauty . . .

PEREGRINE You do well to praise her.

SIR POLITIC . . . and conversation.

PEREGRINE Being your wife, she has a good example.

SIR POLITIC Madam, here is a gentleman acquaintance. He appears a youth, but he is . . .

LADY WD-BE . . . none.

SIR POLITIC He has recently come into society.

LADY WD-BE How recently? Today? Is this "his" habit? Well, Sir Would-Be, I am surprised. I thought your honour would be more precious to you than to besmirch it thus. A man of your gravity and rank! But some knights care little for the promises they make to ladies - particularly the ones they marry.

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LADY WD-BE By any spurs. *(to PEREGRINE)* "Sir", a word with you. I would not quarrel or be violent with any gentlewoman. All behaviour that reminds me of peasants makes me shudder. No lady should wrong another of her sex no matter what

she wears. In my poor judgement it is a solecism in our sex, if not in manners.

PEREGRINE I do not understand.

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LADY WD-BE Indeed I will sir, since you provoke me with your impudence and the laughter of your . . . siren . . . your catamite . . .

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SIR POLITIC This gentleman is of noble birth and one of us.

LADY WD-BE One of them, more like. Come, you embarrass me, Sir Politic. It shames me that you are not ashamed to be the lord of a lewd harlot, a common whore, a female devil in male disguise.

SIR POLITIC (*to PEREGRINE*) A female devil? If that you are, I must bid farewell to your delights and let my wife entertain you.

*Exit SIR POLITIC*

LADY WD-BE Oh, you may wear a face of innocence but your concubine will hear what I have to say!

PEREGRINE This is a fine state of affairs. Do you always behave like this? Practise your insults when the opportunity arises?

LADY WD-BE Enough, "sir".

PEREGRINE Madam, if your husband sent you to buy a shirt or to invite me to your home, there are easier ways by far of gaining my attention.

LADY WD-BE You are in my trap. I will not let you go.

PEREGRINE Why am I in it? Why should I want to go? Your husband said you were fair. So you are, except your nose, on the side that catches the sun, is somewhat red and your hair . . .

LADY WD-BE Such brazenness cannot be endured.

**CELIA and MAIDSERVANT**

appears in 7 of 12 scenes

Celia is the beautiful pious, abused wife of Corvino, who pimps her to Volpone. The Maidservant, a very different character, works for Lady Would-Be; she says little but great humour comes from her facial expressions and phphysical movements.

(a) SCENE 6 with VOLPONE

CORVINO My dear, sweet Celia, you may yet redeem yourself. I'll say no more. Otherwise, consider yourself divorced. Stay there.

*Exit CORVINO and MOSCA*

CELIA Dear God and heavenly saints! Has he no shame? No sense of sin? Must modesty give way to money?

VOLPONE It must for those who never taste true love. 'Tis true, Celia, your husband would sell his place in Paradise if offered money for it. Why are you surprised to see me come to life? Your beauty has worked this miracle and raised me up.

CELIA Sir!

VOLPONE Don't be shy. And don't imagine that I am bedridden. I am as fresh, as hot, as high and as eager as any lover.

CELIA May lightning strike me dead!

VOLPONE My dear Celia, in place of a vile husband you have found a worthy lover. See here what you are queen of. Pearls more valued than those Cleopatra drank. A diamond worthy of a Roman empress. Here's an ear-ring would buy them all back again.

CELIA Sir, such things might move a mind susceptible to such delights, but my innocence is all the wealth I wish. Once that is lost, I have nothing. And it cannot be bought with these riches.

VOLPONE My dear, you will bathe in roses and violets mixed with the rarest wines. We shall drink gold and amber until the room whirls and we enact the love of Gods.

CELIA Sir, if you have a heart that may open or any part of honour, set me free. If not, be kind and kill me. If you will not take pity on me, be ruled by anger not lust. Punish my beauty. Scratch or wound it, flay my hands. Do anything but do not dishonour me. I will pray a thousand hours for your health and reveal to the world your virtue.

VOLPONE Tell everyone I am old, cold and impotent? You abuse my patience. I should have done the act and then spoken. Yield, or I will force you!

CELIA Oh, God in Heaven!

VOLPONE You speak in vain.

**VOLTRE AUDITION SIDES**

appears in 6 of 12 scenes

Voltore is 40+, old in ideas if not in body. If s/he is Scottish (s/he does not need to be), s/he is a typical Edinburgh advocate, with appearance of uprightness in body and mind. Underneath the appearance, however, is greed and, when necessary, conspiracy to achieve his/her aims. [This role was originally conceived as being for a man, but we are very willing to consider a woman in this part.]

(a) SCENE 1 with MOSCA and VOLPONE

MOSCA Sir, Signior Voltore has come to see you.

VOLPONE I thank him.

MOSCA He has brought a present for you.

VOLPONE He is most welcome. Pray him come more often.

VOLTRE How are you, sir?

VOLPONE Where is the plate? My eyes are bad.

VOLTRE I am sorry to see you so weak.

MOSCA (*aside*) And not weaker.

*MOSCA hands VOLPONE the plate; he grasps it fiercely. VOLTRE is taken aback.*

VOLPONE You are too generous.

VOLTRE No, sir. I wish I could give you health as much as that plate .

VOLPONE You give what you can. It reveals your love and will not go unrewarded. I pray, see me often.

VOLTRE Indeed I shall, sir.

VOLPONE Do not desert me. I will have news for you.

MOSCA Do you hear that, sir?

VOLPONE I cannot now last long.

MOSCA You are his heir.

VOLPONE I am going. Oh! Oh! I sail to my port. Oh! Oh! I am near my final haven.

MOSCA Alas, poor gentleman! Well, we all must go.

VOLTRE But, Mosca . . .

MOSCA Age will conquer.

VOLTRE But tell me, am I his heir for certain?

MOSCA You are, sir. I beg you take me into your household. All my hopes depend upon your worship. I am lost unless your favour shines on me.

VOLTRE It shall shine and warm you, Mosca.

MOSCA Thank you, kind sir. I am your housekeeper. All this is yours. I wear your keys. I itemise your jewels, your gold, your silver and your coins.

VOLTRE But am I the only heir?

MOSCA You alone, sir. Confirmed this very day. The wax is still warm, the ink scarcely dry.

VOLTRE I am honoured.

(b) SCENE 8 (1st court scene)

VOLTRE Most honoured judges, I must reveal to you the most shameless act of impudence and treachery that Venice has ever seen. This lewd woman, whose

false tears are but a mask, has long been known to be unfaithful with that lascivious youth. This is no mere suspicion. She was taken in the act by this man, her loving husband and pardoned by him. But, your honours, some who receive mercy are so ashamed they hate the benefit. In place of thanks, they plot to expunge the memory of their lewdness. Of that, more anon. Meantime, this lady, the wicked youth's gentle mother, hearing of this foul act, one of many that assaulted her tender ears, grieved she could no longer be his parent and disinherited him.

1st JUDGE      How strange! The young man has always been reckoned fair and honest.

VOLTORE      Which makes his vice so dangerous. With the appearance of virtue he can easily sin. But as I was saying, your honours, his mother, resolving to sign the will today, was somehow betrayed. The fiend resolved with his paramour to enter Volpone's house (the man who would receive the noble woman's inheritance), and there sought his mother. The plan, your lordships? I tremble that a son should have the foul, felonious intent to murder such a gentle mother! Then, when aware that she was absent, what did he do? Repent? No! More villainy instead. He dragged from his bed the aged bedridden gentleman, left him naked on the floor and fled with this strumpet who had acted as his lure. Now they seek to redeem themselves by blaming the good husband to whom they owe their lives.

**THREE JUDGES and JESTERS AUDITION SIDES**

appear in Epilogue, Prologue and 3 or 4 of 12 scenes

The judges have distinct characteristics: (1) is the chief justice, formal, (2) is deaf / senile, (3) is often bored. In the prologue and epilogue these characteristics do not appear.

Two of the judges will play jesters in one scene, tormenting Sir Politic Would-Be. Movements exaggerated.

Two or all three of the judges will also appear in the crowd scene as labourers, fishwives etc. Stock phrases and comic physical moves will be required.

**(a) PROLOGUE**

3rd JUDGE V olpone, childless, rich, feigns sick, so dares  
 1st JUDGE O ffer his estate to several heirs,  
 2nd JUDGE L ies prone in bed as his servant receives  
 3rd JUDGE P resents galore. Then, greedily she weaves  
 1st JUDGE O ther plots to seize virtue rare as gold.  
 2nd JUDGE N ew schemes follow; they thrive but then unfold.  
 3rd JUDGE E ach comes to justice and punishment takes hold.

**(b) EPILOGUE**

3rd JUDGE V olpone and his servant plotted deep  
 1st JUDGE O bscured their goal to add to riches' heap  
 2nd JUDGE L ied to friend and foe, wise man and fool  
 3rd JUDGE P ersuaded one to sell his wife - how cruel!  
 1st JUDGE O 'erreached themselves, now face the iron and whip.  
 2nd JUDGE N ow tell us, gentle folk, if you did like our script  
 3rd JUDGE E ach may applaud and maybe leave a tip . . .

**(c) SCENE 8**

1st JUDGE I have never heard the like.  
 2nd JUDGE Is there more?

*Enter MOSCA and LADY WOULD-BE*

MOSCA Be resolute, madam. That is the lady I told you of.  
 LADY WD-BE So that is she! Chameleon! Harlot! How dare you look at me! A thousand pardons. I fear I have forgotten the dignity of the court . . .  
 3rd JUDGE No, madam.  
 LADY WD-BE . . . and said too much . . .  
 3rd JUDGE Indeed not, madam.  
 LADY WD-BE . . . which I am not wont to do.

2nd JUDGE Her evidence seems strong. What did she say?

LADY WD-BE I did not intend to scandalise your honours or cast shame upon my sex.

1st JUDGE We believe you, madam.

LADY WD-BE You must believe me.

2nd JUDGE Believe what?

3rd JUDGE Madam, we do.

LADY WD-BE My breeding is not so coarse that I would be so importunate . . .

3rd JUDGE Lady . . .

LADY WD-BE . . . in such estimated company as your honourships.

1st JUDGE We take your word.

LADY WD-BE You may take my word.

3rd JUDGE Whichever word, let her have the last. What witnesses have you to support your cause?

BONARIO Our consciences.

CELIA And the Lord Above, who never fails the innocent.

1st JUDGE Their testimony cannot be accepted.

BONARIO Not in your court, ruled by mob and noise.

3rd JUDGE Now you are in contempt.

(b) SCENE 12

2nd JUDGE Who has died?

3rd JUDGE Volpone is dead?

CORVINO Today, your worships.

BONARIO Ah, sweet justice!

1st JUDGE Volpone did not deceive us?

CORVINO In truth Mosca received what this man thought his own. This pair are guilty. This man is quite confused.

2nd JUDGE As am I.

3rd JUDGE If the servant is truly the heir, we must show respect. It was wrong to send a simple officer to summon her.

2nd JUDGE Summon who?

1st JUDGE Volpone's Mosca!

3rd JUDGE *to NOTARY* Go find her, say the court requests her presence to settle a few doubts.

2nd JUDGE All that I need is a little clarification. Who is accused? What is the crime? Are there witnesses? When is luncheon?

1st JUDGE Do you stand by your accusation that your wife and this man . . .

CORVINO I stake my wealth, my life, my name on it.

1st JUDGE And you, madam?

CORBACCIA The advocate's a blackguard. He lies.

3rd JUDGE That is not the question.

CORBACCIA So does the servant.

2nd JUDGE This is utter confusion.

VOLTRE Your worships, these papers . . .

1st JUDGE This cannot be resolved. These papers claim the lady was brought to Signior Volpone's room by her husband and when he left this gentleman protected her.

VOLTRE Indeed, your worships.

3rd JUDGE But given his impotence Volpone could not ravish her.

CORVINO Your worships saw the man's condition. He could not raise even a finger. Again I say, this lawyer is mad, possessed, obsessed.

2nd JUDGE And I am stressed.

**OFFICER and JESTER AUDITION SIDES**

appears in 4 of 12 scenes

The OFFICER is the policeman who shepherds the accused in and out of court. S/he has few lines but we expect the actor to have a physical presence and actions appropriate to a comedy. The officer will also appear as one of three JESTERS tormenting Sir Politic – again physical comedy is important. Finally the officer will appear as a labourer or housewife in the crowd scene, making stock responses and with facial and physical actions to match.

1st JESTER                   Where is he?

2nd JESTER                   Hiding somewhere.

3rd JESTER                   For the city's honour we must find him.

*The JESTERS seek Sir POLITIC; Enter PEREGRINE with a burning paper*

2nd JESTER                   Who are you, sir?

PEREGRINE                   I? A humble merchant.

1st JESTER                   We seek the English knight.

PEREGRINE                   I came to see this strange animal. Some say it is a giant tortoise.

2nd JESTER                   It looks a monster.

3rd JESTER                   It looks quite dead.

*Enter LADY WOULD-BE*

PEREGRINE                   You might strike it to see if it moves.

3rd JESTER                   Or jump on it.

*LADY WOULD BE squawks on Jester 3's threat to jump on the tortoise, making everyone turn to her. JESTER 3 immediately salutes her, which causes her to squawk again. PEREGRINE hides his face as soon as he realises who she is (maybe on her second squawk) but turns half-round at least once to see if she's still in the room. She attempts to sidle past JESTER 2, who is so nervous that it causes her to squawk again. She reaches the far door (B), where JESTER 1 leans towards her with his finger up to his mouth, at which point she gives her final squawk before getting out. After she exits, the action continues.*

2nd JESTER                   Does it move?

PEREGRINE                   I think it creeps.

1st JESTER                   I'll poke it hard.

PEREGRINE                   Do so, sir.

2nd JESTER                   Poke harder.

*SIR POLITIC makes a noise.*

PEREGRINE                   I pray you, sir, do not hurt him.

3rd JESTER                   See, it moves!

2nd JESTER I would see more.

*SIR POLITIC's hands and feet become visible. The MAIDSERVANT enters , unobserved and watches the scene in laughter.*

3rd JESTER It wears shoes!

1st JESTER And gloves!

*They poke SIR POLITIC harder; he jumps and squeals.*

2nd JESTER What miraculous creature is this?

*They pull off the shell*

1st JESTER This is your fearful tortoise? It is but the Englishman.

SIR POLITIC I beg you, sirs, do not torture me.

3rd JESTER A trembling knight disguised as a tortoise. A story to tell in San Marco.

2nd JESTER Or anywhere.

SIR POLITIC I am no spy. I meant no harm.

3rd JESTER A sight not to be forgotten. The whole city should hear of it.