

Bastianello

THE STORY

In the tradition of Italian *opera buffa*, *Bastianello* shows different stages of married life, mostly in tatters. It is first and foremost a comedy, filled with goofy slapstick humor (including a man who can't figure out how to put on his pants) and capped by a happy ending. But the deeper significance of the piece lies in its interplay of humor and melancholy.

The story begins with narration by a young man in a tree outside Luciano's farmhouse. He tells of a wedding, 20 years earlier, when the bride, Amadora, goes downstairs to bring up more wine for her celebratory dinner. Once she has opened the cask, her elation turns to depression as she realizes that this is the happiest moment of her life — and that everything will go downhill from here. Soon the whole family is in tears. When her new husband, Luciano, finds them, he explodes in rage and deserts his wife on their wedding night.

Luciano vows that he will return only after he finds six people as foolish as his family. During his travels, he visits a hapless couple in another small farmhouse, another bride and groom outside the gate of a nearby village, and an elderly man near a lake. As he racks up his tally of fools and the comedy escalates, Luciano is led to a surprising conclusion.