

P E R G O L E S I
LA SERVA PADRONA

or

FROM MAID TO MADAME

English Version
by Donald Pippin

FIRST INTERMEZZO

UBERTO enters, only partially dressed. He repeatedly rings a bell for his servant.

UBERTO:

All gone haywire, a sorry state!
Pampered servants forever late.
I'm the master, yet still I wait.
Days like this will drive me crazy,
Drive me crazy.

Haggard, harried, round in circles,
Plans miscarried --
A sorry state, already late,
And still I wait.
Days like this, oh days like this
Will drive me crazy.

This I call a sorry state,
Haggard, harried, as I wait
Though already running late.

A sorry state, already late,
And once again I wait and wait.
At this rate,
I'm headed, headed, headed
For the asylum.

RECITATIVE

UBERTO: This goes beyond the limit!
Three whole hours I have waited,
And still my maid will not condescend
To bring my morning chocolate,
And I have urgent business.

Oh, patience! God give me patience!
The injustice!
I am far too considerate and easy,
And in return, she drives me to distraction.

Serpina! Serpina! Come tomorrow.

(to Vespone, who is standing by)

And you! Let's have some action!
Don't stand there like a statuette.
Get a move on.
Find out what's happened.
What a blockhead!
Hurry, run upstairs, find Serpina.
See what detains Her Ladyship. *(Vespone goes)*

The devil! Do I deserve it?
What makes her so ungrateful?
For years I've been indulgent, showed affection,
Treated her like a daughter.
And day by day she becomes more independent,
More outspoken and defiant.
The little tyrant thinks that she can run me.
Once and for all, she must learn
I'm still the master!

Where's that fool that I sent?
This comes from being lenient.

Serpina enters, speaking to Vespone and paying no attention whatever to Uberto.

SERPINA: Have you finished?
I am tired of taking orders.
I've told you, I shall be coming when convenient.

UBERTO: (Witness!)

SERPINA: I'm busy, and besides,
The master's got all morning.
You spoil him.

UBERTO: (You see my point!)

SERPINA: Be careful. I gave you fair warning,
And I have lost my appetite for preaching.
I've found a more effective way of teaching.

She lifts her hand, threatening.

UBERTO: Serpina, stop at once!
Dear, sweet Serpina! Do control your temper.

SERPINA: But this insulting clod, this booby
Must learn some manners.

UBERTO: You might leave that to the master.

SERPINA: You mean, sir, I'm only a servant
And must take whatever's handed,
Simply do as I'm commanded.
No, no, no, sir!
Although not well connected,
I want to be respected,
No less than a lady,
A gentlewoman, an aristocrat!

UBERTO: God save the queen!
Oh, gracious royal majesty!
I tip my hat.

SERPINA: This rude, revolting rustic . . .

UBERTO: Take a bow!

SERPINA: Had the gall . . .

UBERTO: Ha! The presumption!

SERPINA: . . . to disturb me over nothing.

UBERTO: No! How dared he?
The lout deserves a whipping.

SERPINA: Now we are making progress.

UBERTO: But 'twas I gave the order.

SERPINA: And why so urgent?

UBERTO: Why so urgent?
Did I not request a cup of choc'late?

SERPINA: Let's not be impatient.

UBERTO: You dare call me impatient
When I've been pacing since early morning?

SERPINA: (*sweetly*) Just tell me exactly when you'd like it.

UBERTO: Right now, this instant!

SERPINA: (*casually*) I would not recommend it.
Already late, nearly time for your lunch.

UBERTO: No choc'late?

SERPINA: No choc'late. We'd better skip today, sir.
You'll survive without it.
That being settled,
Let's say no more about it.

UBERTO: Vespone, now that the Duchess has vetoed the choc'late,
Join me! Let's drink a toast to equal rights.

SERPINA: What is that loony laughing at?

UBERTO: At me. I've the clout of a clam.
This time I'll break my shell
And show the beast I am!
The earthworm will rebel,
And turn things upside down
Come heav'n or hell!

ARIA

UBERTO:



All hel-ter skel-ter! My house a zoo be-cause of you.
A tangled knot,
I'm in the stew
And on the spot,
Without a place to run for shelter.

Oh, don't pretend
That things will mend:
This game must end.

(to Vespone)

High time she understand
Who has the upper hand.
Am I a monkey?
Oh, no, no, no!
A dog or donkey?
Oh, say not so!

(to Serpina)

Conflict, chaos and confusion,
My house a zoo,
Because of you.
By day, by night,
We fuss, we fight,
Without conclusion.

Come rain or shine,
No fault of mine.
At dusk, at dawn
The show goes on.
A tangled knot,
I'm in the stew
And on the spot,
And who knows what
Because of you.
No place to run for shelter.

Oh, don't pretend
That things will mend:
This game must end.

(to Vespone)

You surely will concede
It's time I take the lead.

**Am I contented?
Oh, no, no, no!
Perhaps demented?
Oh, ho, ho, ho!
No, no, no, no!
Oh, say not so!**

(to Serpina)

**Though now a tragedy of tears and woe,
You'll come to see
That it has to be.
Whether right or wrong,
I must be strong:
You've got to go.**

(to Vespone)

**And I can see
That you agree.
Yes? No? Yes? No? Ah!
Assuredly,
Your sympathy
Is all for me. *(Da Capo)***

RECITATIVE

SERPINA:

At last I get the picture.
However hard I try to please you,
My efforts all go down the drain.

UBERTO:

Poor little thing! So mistreated!

SERPINA:

In return for my labors --
All, all in vain! --
I get only criticism.

UBERTO:

This calls for Hearts and Flowers.

SERPINA:

It's not a joke.

UBERTO: *(to Vespone)*

Milady isn't laughing.

SERPINA:

At least, sir, you could say that you are sorry.
This laughter and abuse I fail to fathom.

UBERTO:

Right you are! Perhaps you'd like a trial by jury.

SERPINA: That's enough of your teasing.
I'm getting angry.

UBERTO: Oh no, not that! God help us!
My mistake, dear.

(to *Vespone*) Not a word out of you?
Then get my hat, my coat, my cane,
As I'd better leave at once
Before it storms.

SERPINA: One moment! This is no time for gadding -- ha, ha, ha! --
And poor Serpina is the one you find so foolish.

UBERTO: Since when, Royal Highness,
Must I kneel and beg permission?

SERPINA: Not only is it raining,
But nearly noon.
You'd better wait till later.
Your coat goes back into the closet.

UBERTO: No! I defy you!
I'm over twenty.

SERPINA: Oh why. why be so contrary?
Was I not clear?
You are not leaving.
Now please, do not make me lock the door.

UBERTO: I must be dreaming!
Is this what the world is coming to?

SERPINA: There now, that's better.

UBERTO: Serpina, take warning!
(The devil come and get her!)

ARIA

SERPINA:



Why, why, why do you stand there balking?
No, no, no, you will not go walking!

See here, that sneer is baffling.
My dear, remember
To curb your temper.
Yet, yet Serpina says no, no.
Sit, sit! I say you're not to go.

You scowl, you growl, you grumble.
Poor me! So meek, so humble.
Sit, sit! I have no time for talking.
See here, that sneer is baffling.
My goodness gracious!
Why so pugnacious?
Tut, tut! Serpina says no, no,

Although I might say yes if
Your tone were less aggressive,
Before your mighty power
Am I to cringe and cower?

See, see my way.
Sit, sit!
I say no, no.
Serpina says no, no,
Your Serpina says you're not to go.

By now I trust you understand
My little reprimand
So well intended.
Alone and undefended,
I'm bound to have my say,
And thus remind you, you'd best obey! *(Da Capo)*

RECITATIVE

- UBERTO:
(to Vespone)
Oh, I give up!
Were you listening?
Slight change of plan. Deposit
All of my things back in the closet.
You heard Milady say I'm not to go out walking.
- SERPINA:
(to Vespone)
Of course. It's all so simple.
You heard him! Let's have obedience!
What's the matter?
You're staring. Your eyes grow bigger.
You look aghast.
- UBERTO:
Yes, stare at me, gape at me.
Step right up to see the latest sideshow.
Nothing ever like it.
I'm the star of the circus,
The world's biggest chump.
Come, take a look --
She cracks the whip, I jump.
- SERPINA:
What childish theatrics!
- UBERTO:
Oh, you little monster!
Go away, don't come near me!
The play is done, the curtain's down.
Vespone, wipe off the frown.
I've found the answer.
What I need's a wife.
I'll take a hag or a harpy;
Give me a shrew, no matter who,
She will do.
To save me from this witch,
I'll marry out of spite
This very night.
- SERPINA:
(The fish is wriggling in the net.)
Of course, a wife. Yes, I approve.
Very wise.
- UBERTO:
You approve? Ha, ha, ha! Thanks a million!
Yes, my dear, I'll do as you advise.

SERPINA: Of course you'll marry *me*!

UBERTO: You?

SERPINA: Husband!

UBERTO: Oh, no!

SERPINA: Oh, yes!

UBERTO: Oh, my head! I may faint!
Quick, Vespone, my coat.
Let me out!

SERPINA: Though you seem a bit resistant,
It was meant all along:
Predestination!

UBERTO: Dear child, just go somewhere distant.

SERPINA: Dear bride, you'll soon be saying.

UBERTO: Ye gods! Don't forsake me!
O blessed death, come take me!

SERPINA: When I am your wife,
Not death but life!
Too late for turning back.

UBERTO: Thunder rolls, storms approach,
The sky is black!

DUETTO

SERPINA:

Why not say it & display it, for your eyes give in- vi- ta- tion?

**Slyly, fondly smiling,
Not unwilling!**

**Oh, your tongue would tell me no, no, no,
But your eyes say otherwise.
Yes, yes, yes, yes,
That is what your eyes express.**

UBERTO: **Have you heard it?
How absurd, it
Is your wild imagination.
Never, never, never
Is the only way to word it.
Tongue & lips & eyes say no,
And they shout fortissimo.
Yes, yes, yes, yes,
Shoot me if I acquiesce.**

SERPINA: **Why, oh why? Why, oh why?
Do I not inspire
Sparks and tremors of love on fire?
Like a dove, come wooing,
Cooing, while pursuing.
Why conceal it?
You feel it.
It's love on fire!**

UBERTO: **(No perhaps,
No could, no maybe:
If I weaken, I'll awaken under wraps.)**

SERPINA: **(He is edging toward surrender,
Toward surrender.)
Love is calling,
Warm and tender . . .**

UBERTO: **Go, tempting devil!
Get thee behind me!**

SERPINA: **Love is calling to join the revel.
Why delay? Let's wed today.
Together for ever and ever!
Let's not delay. Today's the day!**

UBERTO: **No, no, never!
No, never! No, never!
We must delay. Oh, not today!**

SERPINA: **Why not say it**

When your eyes betray it?
Slyly dancing, eyes entrancing . . .

UBERTO: A correction! 'Tis an error,
I'm in terror.

SERPINA: No, no, no, no!
I insist, why resist?
It is time that I be kissed.
Learn at last what you have missed.

UBERTO: I'm in terror.

SERPINA: Ah, my dear, what's to fear?
Stars auspicious, time propitious,
Love's delicious.

UBERTO: (First consenting, then repenting.)

SERPINA: Even though you say no,
Why conceal it?
You feel it.
The beauty sheer
Of love on fire!

UBERTO: (I begin with chagrin
To suspect that she will win.
Apropos, no, no, no!
I prefer the status quo.)

SERPINA: Love is calling,
Warm and tender . . .

UBERTO: I'll not surrender!
Get thee behind me!

SERPINA: Ever, ever, evermore.
Tell me what I wait for.

UBERTO: (Never, never, nevermore.
You'll be waiting much more.)

SERPINA: Tell me what I'm waiting for.

UBERTO: (You've a longer wait in store.
Let her win, I'll begin

With a double shot of gin.)

SERPINA: **Made for leisure, love's a pleasure.
Join the revel!**

UBERTO: **(Looking grim. Sink or swim.)**

SERPINA: **Throw discretion to the devil.**

UBERTO: **(First consenting, then repenting.)**

SERPINA: **(He's relenting, ha, ha!
Lose or win, do give in!
Love is not a mortal sin.)**

UBERTO: **(Caving in, caving in,
Must I take it on the chin?)**

SERPINA: **Love's bewitching, yes, yes!**

UBERTO: **I'm not switching, no, no!**

SERPINA: **Forever, forever, forever!
No more delay, today's the day!**

UBERTO: **No, never! No, never! No, never!
We must delay. No, not today!**

SECOND INTERMEZZO

RECITATIVE

Serpina and Vespone. Later, Uberto enters, dressed to go out.

SERPINA: *(to Vespone)* **We must both play our roles to perfection.
Stay alert, careful, careful
To avoid his detection.
If we succeed in this innocent deception
Without disaster,
Bonanza!
When I am the mistress,**

You will be second master.

Now hurry, go and change
But stay in hiding.
When it's time, I shall call you.

UBERTO: (*entering*) (Ah, the little charmer!
Just watch how shrewdly I disarm her!)
May I, lovely lady, or not take a seat?
I beg for your permission.

SERPINA: No more teasing!
My behavior was improper
For a girl in my position.
My rudeness I regret.

UBERTO: You admit defeat.

SERPINA: You will soon take a wife?

UBERTO: Yes, very true, and I repeat,
Not you!

SERPINA: Perish the thought.

UBERTO: Ah, on that we are agreed.

SERPINA: We live and learn.
In turn, I must also start to do some planning.

UBERTO: Very wise, very prudent.

SERPINA: And I've come to a decision.

UBERTO: So soon?

SERPINA: In short, I've found the man I mean to marry.

UBERTO: Congratulations!
I'd say you found a husband
Already boxed and packaged.

SERPINA: Yes, there are days
When the hand of destiny takes over.

UBERTO: Sooner the better!

Who is the lucky man?

SERPINA: A sturdy soldier.

UBERTO: Good, we are unacquainted?

SERPINA: His name is Captain Tempest.

UBERTO: Sounds rather stormy.

SERPINA: And the name, I fear, would be a fair description
Of his wild disposition.

UBERTO: Shocking!

SERPINA: His temper's violent.

UBERTO: Charming!

SERPINA: His rage uncontrollable.

UBERTO: Adorable!

SERPINA: Alas, he little knows his power.
Like a bull, he lunges, plunges,
Lashes, smashes, and so on.

UBERTO: Oh, what merry days you two will have together!

SERPINA: How so?

UBERTO: Well, even here we've had some problems,
Now and then.
As a servant, you've been a bit outspoken.
As a wife
I frankly tremble for your life,
When the gun goes off,
And like a bull he lunges, plunges,
Smashes, and so on.

SERPINA: In time, no doubt
Serpina will find out.

UBERTO: But this is most upsetting.
My dear, I hope you're not forgetting
My fondness for you.

SERPINA: I'm ever grateful.
And meanwhile, wrap up
And don't catch cold, sir.
God bless you and the bride you've chosen.
But now and then, remember days of old, sir.

UBERTO: How did it come to this?
Was there need of this mad confusion?
Or of this sad conclusion?

ARIA

SERPINA:



Think of her in the twilight falling.

**Come December, you'll remember
Your little jewel.
Fate, oh so cruel!
Those days so dear,
Now gone forever!
Those days recall
And shed a tear.**

**(Aha! If I'm not mistaken,
He is shaken by regret.
He'll awaken, ha!
Overtaken, ha!
Caught in love's alluring net.)**

**Your Serpina then recalling,
Then recalling,
Think of her in the twilight falling.**

**You'll remember your little jewel.
Fate, oh so cruel!
Ah, so cruel, harsh and cruel!
Those days so dear,
Now gone forever!
Those days recall
And shed a tear.**

**(He'll awaken, ha!
Overtaken, ha!
Caught in love's alluring net.**

**Some cold eve in winter weather,
Winter weather,
I shall find you and remind you
Of our springtime days together,
Together.
Oh, distant day!
Our month of May!
(Now my hand he softly presses.
Take three guesses:
Who will now have the say,
Have the say?)**

RECITATIVE

- UBERTO: (This ghastly plan of marriage
She's intent on pursuing
Is none of my doing.)
- SERPINA: (Though he begins to fidget,
He will catch the ball exactly as I pitch it.)
- UBERTO: My dear, you surely know
I'll always remember you with fond affection.
- SERPINA: Would you care to meet the captain?
- UBERTO: I'd be delighted.
- SERPINA: Then I shall run and get him;
He's waiting down below.
- UBERTO: Here?
- SERPINA: If you'll excuse me . . . *(She leaves)*
- UBERTO: Ha! With this madman I foresee disaster!
Justice demands that she suffer in return
For all that she's inflicted on her master.
But him?
Am I to cast her to such a rival?

Very slim are her chances of survival.

Ah, so naive! A baby!
She's lost without my protection.
Me? . . . wed a servant? . . .
Be bold, defy convention!
Marriage! . . . perhaps, well, *maybe* . . .
Never! No, no, no, no, never!
Go away, tempting serpent!
Stay out of my garden!

Still, though, long I have felt affection,
A love almost parental . . .
Stop! Am I crazy?
I must cool off,
Before getting sentimental.

Yet something is stirring deep within.
Can it be pity, or worse?
My head is in a spin!
All starting over!

ARIA

UBERTO:



**No more can I deny it.
My heart will not stay quiet.
Elation
Entrancing, yet galling,
And not unlike despair.**

**An inner voice is calling,
Is calling for caution:
Uberto, oh beware! Oh beware!**

**No more can I deny it.
My heart will not stay quiet,
Elation
That some would call despair.
If love, take care.**

If pity, beware!

**But what to do?
Though in distress,
I must confess
I like it, too.
Though in distress,
I like it, too.**

**An inner voice is calling,
Is calling for caution:
Uberto, oh beware! Oh beware!**

**I would and yet would not.
The wind blows cold and hot.
I'm torn this way and that;
So back and forth, now yes, then no,
I'm tossing to and fro.
The wind blows cold and hot.
I would and yet would not. *(Da Capo)***

RECITATIVE

Serpina enters with Vespone in soldier's uniform.

SERPINA: Step inside to meet the master, darling.

UBERTO: This, Serpina? Your fiance?

SERPINA: My own captain.

UBERTO: (Oh, what a monster! What a lout!
 Positively dinosauric.)
 Sir, I'm charmed, so delighted,
 Such a pleasure.
 I hear that you wish to wed my little treasure.
 Well, well! You lucky soldier!

Vespone nods and says nothing.

Well, well! My blessings on you both.

Again Vespone nods and says nothing.

Well, well.

UBERTO: Listen here: this engagement --
Can it be broken?

SERPINA: Well, I would hate to send it parcel post.
One moment . . .

(She pretends to consult with Vespone.)

UBERTO: (Oh, I can guess.
This cursed captain's not inclined to haggle.
He'll have his pound of flesh.)

SERPINA: Now he's insisting . . .

UBERTO: So what's the latest?
(We speak through an interpreter.)

SERPINA: The money you must produce
Here and now in ready cash,
Or everything is off.

UBERTO: He said so?

SERPINA: He said so.

UBERTO: And suppose he does not wed you,
What's that to me?

SERPINA: Then you must marry me yourself.

UBERTO: He said so?

SERPINA: He said so.
Unless you'd rather wind up served as suet.

UBERTO: I don't believe that bluster.

SERPINA: We shall find out.

UBERTO: I believe him!
Sir, I'll do it.
Hold! Keep away from me.
To higher powers I hereby surrender.
Yes, I shall marry you.

SERPINA: Just as you wish. I, too, surrender.

UBERTO: My hand!

SERPINA: Cheers for the master!

UBERTO: I give my pledge.

SERPINA: And cheers for dear Vespone! *(She unmask him.)*

UBERTO: Ah, you villain! An ambush!
Have you no morals?
Both of you! *(He starts to storm out.)*

SERPINA: Stay! No more wrangling.
An end to fighting.
With peace and harmony
Now inviting.

UBERTO: *(after a longish pause)* A truce!
This calls for celebration:
Here's to Serpina!

SERPINA: And to my transformation
From maid to madam!

DUETTO

SERPINA:



**And with a sound of spring,
Such pleasure does it bring,
Like flowers blossoming.**

UBERTO:

**I hear a steady drumming
Like tread of army coming,
A pandemonium
Of sweet delirium.
Defenseless, I succumb
And find Elysium.**

SERPINA:

So clear, you, too, can hear:

Listen . . . ding-a-ding, ding-a-ding, ding-a-ding.

UBERTO: Like you, I hear it, too.
Now come and hear the drum:
Listen . . . pa-pa-pum, pa-pa-pum, pa-pa-pum.

SERPINA: Like you, I hear it, too.

BOTH: This music from within,
What does it say?
What does it mean?

SERPINA: Can it be? . . .

UBERTO: Listen, listen!

SERPINA: Say it, say it!

UBERTO: Say it, say it!

BOTH: Sheer heaven!
What can the music be?
Magic and mystery!
Ah, music for you and me.
Rapturous melody!

SERPINA: Deep inside I feel the tingling
Of joy and wonder mingling.

UBERTO: Ah! To the throbbing of a drum . . .

SERPINA: Beating hard . . .

UBERTO: . . . I find Elysium.

SERPINA: Close at hand . . .
Hear it ringing: ding-a-ding, ding-a-ding, ding-a-ding.

UBERTO: Hear it pounding -- pa-pa-pum, pa-pa-pum, pa-pa-pum.

BOTH: What can this music say,
What does it tell?

SERPINA: Listen well . . .

UBERTO: Listen well . . .

BOTH: My darling, darling, darling, etc.
Ah, heaven! Ah! Ah!
What does it tell us of?
Call it a dream come true,
Yes, this can be only love,
Tender, precious love,
Dearest, all for you!

SERPINA: Nothing known can explain it . . .

UBERTO: And words can but profane it.

SERPINA: And yet . . . who can deny it?

UBERTO: And who, who can foresee it?

SERPINA: Sheer magic, all revealing!

UBERTO: Sheer witchery, softly stealing . . .

BOTH: What's this we are singing of?
Call it a dream come true.
Yes, yes, it's tender, precious love.
Yes, yes, the dear, delicious love,
The love that's all for you!

THE END