



Heather Lynn

Adapted from the play *Les Romanesques* by Edmond Rostand

Translated from French by Barrett H. Clark

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BIG DOG PUBLISHING
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The Romancers

COMEDY. Adapted from the play by Edmond Rostand. In this comic reversal of *Romeo and Juliet*, two fathers concoct a fake family feud to make their son and daughter think they are ill-fated lovers and fall in love. Their scheme succeeds, but now the “feuding” fathers need to find a way to reconcile so that the couple can wed. With no expense spared, the fathers hire the mustached rogue, Straforel, to stage a fake abduction that will include torchbearers, swordsmen, and even musicians to provide live background music. Percinet “rescues” Sylvette from her “abductors,” wedding plans are made, and the wall between the fathers’ neighboring properties is torn down. However, it doesn’t take long before the two fathers realize, that in their case, walls make good neighbors!

Performance time: Approximately 45-60 minutes.



Edmond Rostand
(1868-1918)

About the Story

French poet and dramatist Edmond Eugène Alexis Rostand was born in Marseilles, France, in 1868 to a wealthy family. Rostand's first play, *Les Romanesques* ("The Romancers"), is based on the 13th-century musical fable *Aucassin and Nicolette*. First produced in Paris in 1894, the play was an immediate hit with theatergoers and launched Rostand's career as a playwright. Rostand wrote several other plays but is best known for his comedic masterpiece, *Cyrano de Bergerac*. *Les Romanesques* is the basis for the 1960 musical *The Fantasticks*.

Characters

(2 M, 1 F, 3 flexible, extras)

(Doubling possible.)

SYLVETTE: Hopeless romantic in love with Percinet; female.

PASQUINOT/PASQUINETTE: Sylvette's father; wears a jacket with coattails and a powdered wig; flexible. (If mother, use "Pasquinette" and change script accordingly.)

PERCINET: Hopeless romantic in love with Sylvette; male.

BERGAMIN/BERGAMINA: Percinet's father; wears a jacket with coattails and a powdered wig; flexible. (Note: If mother, use "Bergamina" and change script accordingly.)

STRAFOREL: Arranges fake abductions; walks with a swagger and bravado; wears an elaborate swordsman's costume; male.

BLAISE: Gardener; flexible.

FIDDLER 1-3: Fiddle players; flexible. Note: Music can be live or recorded.

MUSICIANS 1-4: Work for Straforel; flexible. Note: Music may be live or recorded.

NOTARY: Non-speaking; flexible.

WITNESSES 1-4: Flexible.

EXTRAS: As Swordsmen, Musicians, Torchbearers, Notary, Guests, and Witnesses.

Costumes

Costumes should be similar to Louis XVI.

Setting

Late 18th century. There is an old wall covered with vines and flowers separating Bergamin's garden from Percinet's garden.

Sets

Wall. The stage is divided by an old wall covered with vines and flowers. A corner of Bergamin's private garden is SR. A corner of Pasquinet's private garden is SL. On each side of the wall and against it sits a rustic bench.

No wall. The wall has disappeared. The benches are now extreme SR and SL. There are a few pots of flowers, two or three garden statues, and a tree large enough for actors to partially hide behind. At SR is a small garden table with chairs.

Wall in the process of being rebuilt. The wall is partially rebuilt and not yet two feet high. Bricks and sacks of plaster are scattered about.

Synopsis of Scenes

ACT I: Wall that divides Bergamin's garden from Percinet's garden.

ACT II: The wall has disappeared.

ACT III: The wall in the process of being re-built.

Props

Book	Pocket watch, for Bergamin
Cane, for Bergamin	Blue dress, for Sylvette (or it can be another color)
Elaborate swordsman's costume, for Straforel	Trowel
Small piece of paper	Bricks
Pen	Sacks of plaster
King-carrier with red trim (chair supported by 2 poles)	Letter
Mask, for Straforel	Muslin scarf
Sword, for Percinet	Tree with a hollow in its trunk
Folded bill	Workman's clothes and hat, for Straforel
Potted flowers and plants	Dazzling costume, for Straforel
Newspaper	Powdered wig
Rake	Raggedy clothes, for Percinet
Large watering can	Arm sling
Bouquet of flowers	
Handkerchief	
Pencil	

Special Effects

Moon
Reflections of torches
Clock striking eight

*“Let us give
our young romancers
something
they’ll not soon forget.”*

—Bergamln

Act I

(AT RISE: *The stage is divided by an old wall covered with vines and flowers. A corner of Bergamin's private park is SR. A corner of Pasquinet's private park is SL. On each side of the wall and against it is a rustic bench. Percinet is seated on the top of the wall. On his knee is a book. He is reading to Sylvette, who is standing attentively listening on the bench, which is on the other side of the wall.*)

SYLVETTE: Monsieur Percinet, how divinely beautiful!

PERCINET: Is it not? Listen to what Romeo answers: (*Reads.*

As Romeo.) "It was the lark, the herald of the morn,

No nightingale: look, love, what envious streaks

Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east.

Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day

Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops:

I must begone" —

SYLVETTE: (*Hears something.*) Shhhh!

(*Percinet listens.*)

PERCINET: No one! And, Mademoiselle, you must not take fright like a startled bird. Hear the immortal lovers: (*As Juliet. Reads.*) "Yon light is not the daylight, I know it, I,

It is some meteor that the sun exhales,

To be to thee this night a torch-bearer,

And light thee on thy way to Mantua:

Therefore stay yet, thou need'st not to be gone."

(*As Romeo. Reads.*) "Let me be ta'en, let me be put to death;

I am content, so thou will have it so.

I'll say, yon gray is not the morning's eye,

'Tis but the pale reflex of Cynthia's brow;

Nor that is not the lark, whose notes do beat

The vaulty heaven so high above our heads:

I have more care to stay than will to go:

Come, death and welcome" —

SYLVETTE: No, he must not say such things, or I shall cry!

PERCINET: Then let us stop and read no further until tomorrow. We shall let Romeo live! (*Closes book and looks about.*) This charming spot seems expressly made. It seems to me to cradle the words of the Divine Will!

SYLVETTE: The verses are divine, and the soft air here is a divine accompaniment. And see, these green shades! But, Monsieur Percinet, what makes them divine to me is the way you read!

PERCINET: Flatterer!

SYLVETTE: (*Sighs.*) Poor lovers! Their fate was cruel! (*Sighs.*) I think...

PERCINET: What?

SYLVETTE: Nothing!

PERCINET: Something that made you blush red as a rose.

SYLVETTE: Nothing, I say.

PERCINET: Ah, that's too transparent. I see it all...you are thinking of our fathers!

SYLVETTE: Perhaps...

PERCINET: Of their terrible hatred for each other.

SYLVETTE: The thought often pains me and makes me cry when I am alone. Last month, when I came home from the convent, my father pointed out your father's park, and said to me, "My dear child, you behold there the domain of my mortal enemy, Bergamin. Never cross the path of those two rascals, Bergamin and his son Percinet. Mark well my words, and obey me to the letter, or I shall cast you off as an enemy. Their family has always been at bitter enmity with our own." And I promised. But you see how I keep my word!

PERCINET: Did I not promise my father to do the same, Sylvette? Yet I love you!

SYLVETTE: Holy saints!

PERCINET: I love you, my dearest!

SYLVETTE: It's sinful!

PERCINET: Very. But what can we do? The greater the obstacles to be overcome, the sweeter the reward. Sylvette, kiss me!

SYLVETTE: Never! (*Jumps down from the bench and runs off a few steps.*)

PERCINET: But you love me?

SYLVETTE: What?

PERCINET: My dear child...I, too, sometimes think of us and compare you and me with those other lovers...of Verona.

SYLVETTE: But I didn't compare —

PERCINET: You and I are Juliet and Romeo. I love you to despair, and I shall brave the wrath of Pasquinot-Capulet and Bergamin-Montague!

(*Sylvette takes a few steps closer to the wall.*)

SYLVETTE: Then we love? But how, Monsieur Percinet, has it happened so soon?

PERCINET: Love is born we know not how because it must be born. I often saw you pass my window —

SYLVETTE: I saw you, too!

PERCINET: And our eyes spoke in silence.

SYLVETTE: One day, I was gathering nuts in the garden by the wall...

PERCINET: One day, I happened to be reading Shakespeare... See how everything conspired to unite two hearts?!

SYLVETTE: And a little gust of wind blew my scarf in your direction...

PERCINET: I climbed to the wall to return it...

(*Sylvette climbs the wall.*)

SYLVETTE: I climbed, too!

PERCINET: And since that day, my dear, I have waited at the same hour, here by this wall. And each time, my heart beat

louder and faster until I knew by your laugh that you were near!

SYLVETTE: Now since we love, we must be married.

PERCINET: I was just thinking about that.

SYLVETTE: (*Solemnly.*) I, last of the Pasquinots, do solemnly pledge myself to you, last of the Bergamins.

PERCINET: What noble recklessness!

SYLVETTE: We shall be sung in future ages!

PERCINET: Two tender children of two hardhearted fathers!

SYLVETTE: But who knows whether the hour is not at hand when our fathers' hatred may end?

PERCINET: I doubt it.

SYLVETTE: I have heard of stranger things. I can think of half a dozen—

PERCINET: What, for instance?

SYLVETTE: Imagine that the reigning prince comes riding past some day. I run to him and kneel and tell him the story of our love and of our fathers' hatred. The prince asks to see my father and Bergamin and they are reconciled.

PERCINET: And your father gives me your hand!

SYLVETTE: Yes. Or else...you languish, the doctor declares you cannot live—

PERCINET: And asks, "What ails you?"

SYLVETTE: And you answer, "I must have Sylvette!"

PERCINET: And his pride is then forced to bend.

SYLVETTE: Yes. Or else...an aged duke, having seen my portrait, falls in love with me, sends a squire to sue for my hand, and offers to make me a duchess.

PERCINET: And you say, "No!"

SYLVETTE: He is offended, and some dark night when I am in the garden meditating, he springs forth out of the darkness! I scream!

PERCINET: And I lose not a second in springing over the wall, dagger in hand. I fight like a tiger, I—

SYLVETTE: You lay low three or four men. Then my father rushes in and takes me in his arms. You tell him who you

are. His heart softens. He gives me to my savior. Your father consents, for he is proud of your bravery.

PERCINET: Then we live together for years, happy and content!

SYLVETTE: This is not at all impossible, is it?

PERCINET: *(Hears something.)* Someone's coming!

SYLVETTE: Kiss me!

(Percinet kisses Sylvette.)

PERCINET: This evening, at eight, then? As usual? You will come?

(Sylvette disappears behind the wall.)

SYLVETTE: Your father!

(Percinet jumps quickly from the wall. Bergamin enters.)

BERGAMIN: *(To Percinet.)* Ah-ha! I find you here again, dreaming in this corner of the park!

PERCINET: Father, I love this old corner! I adore this bench over which the vines of the wall have so gracefully draped themselves. See what graceful arabesques these festoons make! The air is purer here.

BERGAMIN: By the side of this wall?

PERCINET: I love it!

BERGAMIN: I see nothing lovable about it!

SYLVETTE: *(Aside.)* He can't see why!

PERCINET: *(To Bergamin.)* But it is charming...all covered with ivy and creeper. See here, what honeysuckle! This 100-year-old wall, with its clinging vines, its constellations of flowers, looking through the crannies, kissed by the summer sun, makes the bench a throne fit for kings!

BERGAMIN: Nonsense, you harebrained youth! Do you mean to tell me that this wall has eyes?

PERCINET: Ah, what eyes! (*Turns toward the wall.*) Of soft azure yet dazzlingly blue. Let but a tear come to dim your brightness, or a single kiss —

BERGAMIN: But the wall hasn't eyes, you idiot!

PERCINET: See this vine, though!

(*Percinet plucks part of the vine from the wall and graciously presents it to Bergamin.*)

SYLVETTE: (*Aside.*) How clever!

BERGAMIN: (*To Percinet.*) How stupid! But I know now what has turned your silly head... (*This startles Sylvette. Percinet looks fearful as Bergamin pulls the book out of his pocket.*) ...you come here to read! Plays! (*Drops the book in horror.*) And verse! Verse! That's what's turned your head! Now I see why you talk about eyes and honeysuckle. I tell you to be useful. A wall doesn't have to be beautiful. I am going to have all this green stuff taken away and the bricks re-laid and the holes stopped up. I want a white wall and a high one to keep the neighbors from looking into our park. I want no vines and honeysuckles. Along the top, I'll sprinkle broken glass —

PERCINET: Pity!

BERGAMIN: No pity! I insist on it! Glass...all along the top of the wall! (*Sylvette and Percinet are in despair. Bergamin sits down on the bench.*) And, now, I have something to say to you. (*Rises and examines the wall.*) If the wall hasn't eyes, it may possibly have ears. (*Percinet panics as he sees that Bergamin is about to stand on the bench. Sylvette clings close to her side of the wall, making herself as small as she can. Bergamin decides not to scale the wall, but motions for Percinet to do so.*) See whether there is some curious listener...

(*Percinet climbs to the top of the wall and leans over so that Sylvette can hear him.*)

PERCINET: (*To Sylvette, stage whisper.*) Till tonight!

(*Sylvette gives Percinet her hand and he kisses it.*)

SYLVETTE: (*Stage whisper.*) I'll come as the clock is striking! I adore you!

BERGAMIN: (*To Percinet.*) Well?

(*Percinet jumps down.*)

PERCINET: No one!

(*Bergamin sits.*)

BERGAMIN: Well, then, my boy, I should like to see you married.

SYLVETTE: (*Aside.*) Oh!

BERGAMIN: (*Hears Sylvette. To Percinet.*) What's that?

PERCINET: Nothing.

BERGAMIN: I thought I heard a cry...

PERCINET: (*Looking into the air.*) Some wounded bird, perhaps...

BERGAMIN: I have given the matter my undivided attention, and have chosen a wife for you. (*Percinet whistles and walks away.*) I tell you, I am in earnest, and I intend to force you, if necessary. (*Percinet continues whistling.*) Will you stop that confounded whistling?! The young woman is rich. She's a jewel!

PERCINET: I want none of your jewels!

BERGAMIN: I'll show you, you young insolent!

(*Percinet grasps Bergamin's cane.*)

PERCINET: (*Raising the cane as if to strike Bergamin.*) Spring has filled the bushes with the songs of birds. The brooklets accompany the love notes of wild birds.

BERGAMIN: Rascal!

PERCINET: (*Still holding the cane, ignoring him.*) The whole world laughs and sings farewell to April. The butterflies—

BERGAMIN: Ruffian!

PERCINET: (*Ignoring him.*) Wing their way across the meadows to visit their adored flowers! Love—

BERGAMIN: Villain!

PERCINET: (*Ignoring him.*) Love opens wide the heart of all nature. And you ask me to consent to a marriage of reason!

BERGAMIN: Of course, I do!

PERCINET: (*Passionately.*) No, no, no, Father! I swear by this wall—which hears me, I hope—that my marriage will be more romantic than any dreamed of in the most poetic of the world's love stories!

(*Percinet runs off. Bergamin pursues him.*)

BERGAMIN: (*Shouts.*) Ah, let me catch you! (*Exits.*)

SYLVETTE: (*To herself.*) I can really understand now why Papa hates that odious old man!

(*Pasquinot enters SL.*)

PASQUINOT: Well, Mademoiselle, what are you doing here?

SYLVETTE: Nothing. Taking the air...

PASQUINOT: Alone? But, you silly girl, are you not afraid?

SYLVETTE: Not in the least.

PASQUINOT: Near this wall? I forbade you to come near it! You see that park over there? (*Points SR.*) That belongs to my mortal enemy!

SYLVETTE: I know it, Father, dear.

PASQUINOT: Why, here you are exposed to any insult! Any— (*Slight pause.*) If those rascals knew that my daughter was walking alone in this park... (*Shivers.*) ...brrrrrrrr! It makes me shiver to think of it! I'm

going to have the wall repaired and erect a huge iron grill on top of it!

SYLVETTE: *(To herself.)* He'll never do it. It would cost too much!

PASQUINOT: Now go into the house. Quick!

(Pasquinot glares at her. Sylvette exits.)

BERGAMIN: *(Offstage.)* Take this note at once to Monsieur Straforel.

(When he hears Bergamin, Pasquinot runs to the wall and climbs to the top of it. Bergamin enters.)

PASQUINOT: *(Happily.)* Bergamin!

BERGAMIN: *(Happily.)* Pasquinot!

(Pasquinot and Bergamin warmly embrace.)

PASQUINOT: How are you?

BERGAMIN: Pretty well.

PASQUINOT: How's your gout?

BERGAMIN: Better. And how is your cold?

PASQUINOT: Still troubles me, devil take it!

BERGAMIN: *(Excited.)* Well, the marriage is arranged!

PASQUINOT: *(Surprised.)* What?

BERGAMIN: *(Excited.)* I heard everything. I was hidden in the bushes. They adore each other!

PASQUINOT: *(Overjoyed.)* Bravo!

BERGAMIN: We must bring matters to a head. *(Rubs his hands.)* Ha-ha! Now we can do as we had planned...

PASQUINOT: Yes, and tear down the wall...

BERGAMIN: And live together...

PASQUINOT: Joining our properties...

BERGAMIN: By marrying our children! But I wonder whether they would be so anxious if they knew we wished it?

A marriage arranged beforehand is not so tempting to two young children so romantic as ours. That is why we kept our own wishes a secret. I felt sure that after they had been separated—Sylvette in the convent, Percinet at school—they would thrive on their secret love. That is how I came to invent this hatred of ours. And you even doubted its success! Now, all we have to do is to say yes!

PASQUINOT: But how can it be done? Remember, I've called you a "scoundrel," "fool," "idiot"—

BERGAMIN: (*Annoyed.*) "Idiot"? "Scoundrel" was sufficient.

[END OF FREEVIEW]