

# The libretto in brief

Traduzione di Rodney Stringer

## Act I

*The main hall of Fadinard's house.*

It is the wedding day of the young Fadinard and the beautiful Elena, daughter of Nonancourt, an uncouth, nouveau riche peasant. Having just got back to his apartment in Paris, Fadinard tells Vézinet, Elena's uncle – who has arrived with the gift of a hat-box for the bridal couple – about a most unusual incident. He was on his way back to Paris that same morning, at the head of the wedding procession, when his gighorse ate a young lady's straw hat while that lady was flirting with an officer. But Fadinard did not have time to stop and continued his journey to Paris, despite threats from the officer. The matter, however, has evidently not been forgotten, for Anaide, the young woman, and Emilio, her officer companion, suddenly burst into Fadinard's apartment demanding a new hat. The unexpected entry of the young man's father-in-law and of Elena compels him to hide the two lovers. Only after he has said goodbye to Nonancourt and to his betrothed, does Fadinard attempt to calm Anaide and Emilio. But all in vain: the woman is married and must therefore urgently procure a hat identical to the one eaten by Fadinard's horse. Otherwise, Anaide will not be able to face her husband, who is a suspicious and very jealous man. If Fadinard refuses to look for a hat exactly the same as the one eaten by his horse, Emilio will challenge him to a duel. The bridegroom has no choice. He sets off to look for the straw hat, leaving the clandestine couple in his apartment. Meanwhile the wedding procession makes its way towards the city hall.

## Act II

*A milliner's shop.*

Fadinard learns from a milliner that a hat identical to the one he is looking for has been sold to a Baroness de Champigny. Having found out this lady's address, Fadinard goes off in great haste.

*The main hall of Baroness de Champigny's mansion.*

After celebrating his marriage, Fadinard rushes to Baroness de Champigny's mansion. The noblewoman is expecting the celebrated violinist Minardi, in whose honour she has arranged a sumptuous reception. Believing Fadinard to be her awaited guest, the Baroness warmly welcomes him. Taking advantage of this misunderstanding, Fadinard has no hesitation in asking her to give him her Italian straw hat. The Baroness consents, while the marriage procession led by Nonancourt enters the building. Certain that they have arrived at the wedding banquet, relations and friends of the bridal couple move into the dining room. When the Baroness reappears with the hat, Fadinard realizes that it is a different model. The Italian straw hat that he is looking for has been given by the noblewoman to her niece, Madame Beaupertuis. In the meantime, the wedding procession has invaded the whole mansion, playing such havoc among the Baroness' guests that even the entry of the real Minardi fails to restore any order. Having obtained the address of Madame Beaupertuis, Fadinard sets off with his beloved Elena, followed by the wedding procession.

### **Act III**

*A room at the Beaupertuis' house.*

Beaupertuis is anxiously awaiting the return of his wife, whom he suspects of having cuckolded him. Having learnt that Madame Beaupertuis is not at home, Fadinard has no scruples in rummaging through the whole house in search of the hat. In his turn Nonancourt, believing himself to be in the bridal couple's new apartment, invites the whole wedding procession, led by Elena, to come in. To placate Beaupertuis who has been watching the whole scene in amazement, Fadinard is forced to reveal to him the reason why he must obtain an Italian straw hat as soon as possible. From his words, it dawns on Beaupertuis that the officer's mysterious lover can be no other than his own wife, who left home that very morning wearing a hat identical to the one sought by Fadinard. Pursued by the wedding procession and by Beaupertuis armed with a pistol, Fadinard heads for his apartment.

### **Act IV**

*A square lit by a street-lamp.*

Nonancourt has heard that a woman has been concealed in Fadinard's apartment. Believing her to be a lover of his son-in-law, he has decided to take Elena away with him and to dissolve the marriage just celebrated. After giving Beaupertuis the slip, Fadinard discovers that his uncle Vézinet's hat-box contains precisely an Italian straw hat identical in every respect to the one he is desperately looking for. The young man hurries to deliver the hat to Anaide, while the nocturnal hubbub caused by the wedding procession, which has by now invaded the square, attracts the attention of the constabulary. To re-establish order, the police arrest all the guests and Fadinard is now confronted with Beaupertuis. But after endless ups and downs, he manages to restore the hat to Anaide, who can now at last show herself to her husband. Fadinard embraces his beloved Elena while the guests, who have been released, go home happily.