



dramatist: Another package for typesetting drama with L^AT_EX

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Abstract

As the name plainly says, *dramatist* is a package designed to handle all the typographical specialities which arise in the edition of a dramatic work. It was originally designed to support a private edition of a mid-19th century Italian tragedy in verse: G. B. Niccolini's *Arnaldo da Brescia*. Being a package, it can be used with any class, from standard L^AT_EX classes to the more specialized ones, such as from the KOMA-script bundle, *memoir* (this is the actual class I've used the package with, for my work) and the like.

The package provides a general environment, *drama*, and specific commands for handling stage oriented document divisions (acts, scenes), characters lists and speakers' name appearance, stage directions. Both plays in prose and in verse are supported; for the latter, however, not in an explicit way, but relying instead on the *verse* environment and facilities provided by either the main class or packages like *verse*.

1 Introduction

The edition of a dramatic work needs specific support for several features, from special document divisions (acts and scenes, rather than chapters and sections) to special typographical treatment concerning the characters. This kind of support cannot be given by the standard L^AT_EX classes without redefining a large number of macros, a quite undesirable approach. Hence the need for a class or package expressly designed for this purpose, handling all the specialities involved in the job

The following packages dealing with stage plays and dramatic works are at present available on the CTAN archives and in most T_EX distributions:

- *plari* (Kaijanaho, 2003): a small class that replaces, in the standard L^AT_EX *report* class, the set of usual document divisions with another one more suited for stage scripts, and adds some other minor features (the *sides* package is a new update of *plari* which we unfortunately did not have time to investigate);
- *play* (Kilfiger, 1999): coming with both a class covering most of the basic features of a stage

play and a package designed for supporting insertion of small drama citations in the middle of a document of a different kind;

- *drama* (Swift, 1996): being part of the ambitious Frankenstein bundle, whose unusual philosophy it shares;
- *dramatist* (Dominici, 2003): the package to be introduced here.

The aforesaid packages are characterized by different approaches to the basic *class vs. package* decision and by different degrees of user configurability. It's a matter of opinion, and at last of taste, whether it is better to rely, for anything concerning layout adjustments, placement of floats, indexing, page numbering, appearance of headers and table of contents and so on, upon the facilities provided by a sophisticated class like *memoir* or *scrbook*, or to make use of the many packages which cover the same facilities. I found the first way easier, and that's why I wrote a package rather than a class.

From this point of view, a classification can be made which divides the four packages in two groups: on the one hand, *plari* and *play* come as a class, while on the other, *drama* and *dramatist* come as a package.

In the first group, the use of *plari* class can be recommended only for simple documents: the class lacks some basic features, such as a proper command for defining and typesetting a "Dramatis personæ" list, gives poor support for plays in verse and offers only a low degree of configurability. As it disables all the standard L^AT_EX sectioning commands, the class prevents the author or editor from inserting any material standing outside the stage play script itself, such as a preface, foreword, or introduction.

A more complete class is *play*. Except for the "Dramatis personæ" list, it covers all the major features relating to dramatic works, offers full internal support for plays in verse via a dedicated environment, and shows a reasonable degree of configurability. However, as the definition of the basic `\act` and `\scene` relies on the standard L^AT_EX macros `\chapter` and `\section`, the user cannot redefine single portions of these commands in a simple way: the entire macro must be redefined. Together with the class, a small package is also distributed, which provides a few basic features to be used for printing short citations from a play in the body of a document of a different kind.

As for *drama*, the argument is more complicated. *drama* is part of the Frankenstein bundle and shares its unusual philosophical lines. This sort of object-oriented interface to L^AT_EX, while remarkable from many points of view, makes difficult any attempt at customization by a user who is not en-

tirely familiar with it. However, it is quite usable as it comes, and it shows itself a powerful tool, covering almost all features (though no specific support is given for typesetting plays in verse), notably including a continuation message when a single speech of one character is broken across two pages and divided by a stage direction.

A closer examination of the `dramatist` package is the subject of the next section.

2 Overview of the `dramatist` package

2.1 The drama environment

The first task of a package designed for typesetting drama is to provide an environment which may work as a wrapper for the text to be formatted. In the case of `dramatist`, this is the `drama` environment.

The package provides two versions: the normal version, to be used when typesetting plays in prose, and a starred version for plays in verse. This is due to the different tasks to be performed in the two cases, mainly regarding text arrangement and speech tags' definitions. In the case of a play in prose, the dialogue is arranged in a description-like environment, where the item label is the speaking character's name. In the case of a play in verse, `drama*` calls the `verse` environment (provided by the main class used or by a package like `verse`) to arrange the text and simply prints the speech tag above the dialogue lines. If line numbering is allowed (see section 2.5 below), `drama*` also handles the features concerned with this.

In both cases, nothing, except for the dialogue and short directions within the dialogue, should be enclosed within the `drama` environment. Acts, scenes, stage directions and definitions of characters should be given *outside* the environment itself.

2.2 Document divisions

In a drama, the ordinary document division into chapters and sections is replaced by a division into acts and scenes. `dramatist` provides an interface for such a scheme with the commands `\act` and `\scene`. They start a new act or a new scene (the act on a new page, by default), respectively, take no arguments and by default print in small caps the name *Act* or *Scene*, followed by a roman numeral. An internal counter is charged to hold this numeral, increasing it every time `\act` or `\scene` is called. Like the standard `\chapter` and `\section` commands, `\act` and `\scene` have a starred form, which does not make an entry for the table of contents.

An optional argument can be specified; it is meant only for insertion of footnotes and endnotes, like this:

```
\act[\footnote{Content of the footnote}]
```

If a title for the act or scene is needed, the `\Act` or `\Scene` commands are available:

```
\Act[Short Title]{Title}
```

```
\Scene[Short Title]{Title}
```

`dramatist` provides no `oneact/multiact` switch (as the `drama` package does), which avoids printing the act number for one-act plays, because I think it unnecessary. To achieve such a result, the user need only redefine the single command `\printscenum`, whose default is printing the act number, an endash, and the scene number, like this:

```
\renewcommand{\printscenum}{%
  \scenumfont \thescene}
```

As another example of customization, something other than the English word "Scene" may well be required. This is controlled by the command `\scenename`. To redefine it as the Italian word "Quadro", for example, this is all that is needed:

```
\renewcommand{\scenename}{Quadro}
```

2.3 Characters

Dealing with the characters of the play is another important task when typesetting drama. This involves many aspects and features of the document:

- Usually a "Dramatis Personæ" list is placed before any other material.
- One may want the name of the characters to appear in some particular typographical shape within the stage directions.
- Finally every part of the dialogue should be introduced by the name of the speaker printed in a standard recognizable form.

One can find support for all these features in the `dramatist` package.

The typographical appearance of the characters is defined once and for all by calling the command `\Character`. It takes up to three arguments: the first, optional, argument specifies what is to appear in the "Dramatis Personæ" list; the second the name of the character throughout the document, both in the stage directions and as a speaker; and the third provides the commands for calling the name specified by the second argument. In short, if $\langle arg2 \rangle$ and $\langle arg3 \rangle$ are respectively the second and the third argument, `\Character` creates a pair of commands `\langle arg3 \rangle` and `\langle arg3 \rangle speaks` which can be used for printing $\langle arg2 \rangle$ in a stage direction or as a speaker (see the examples below).

The "Dramatis Personæ" list is produced by the command `\DramPer`. It prints only those entries defined by `\Character` with the first, optional, argument specified. This can be useful to omit some

speakers from the “Dramatis Personæ” list, or when two or more individual characters act simultaneously as a single speaker (and thus, no related entry exists in the “Dramatis Personæ” list).

However, a `\speaker` command is also provided to deal with these occurrences: it takes one argument, the name of the character to print, but it does not define any command for printing the name in a stage direction.

Characters listed in the *Dramatis Personæ* may need to be grouped and given a common designation. For this occurrence the package provides an environment, `CharacterGroup`, taking a mandatory argument specifying the designation for the characters in the following group.

Inside this environment, the characters have to be defined by `\GCharacter`, whose syntax is the same of `\Character`, except that the first argument is here, obviously, mandatory. In the output, the characters will be grouped by a big parentheses with the common designation printed, centered, to the right. The user can define the amount of space reserved for the characters’ names, the parentheses, and the designation by means of `\CharWidth`, `\ParenWidth` and `\GroupWidth`, respectively.

2.4 Stage directions and settings

Finally, the package provides support for printing stage settings and small indications in the body of the dialogue. The user can issue a `\StageDir` command (or the equivalent `stagedir` environment for longer stage directions) in the first case or a `\direct` command in the second case.

When working with a verse play, the `\direct` command also takes a starred form, to be used when the command itself occurs at the end of a stanza. This works only with the `verse` package and the `verse` environment provided by the `memoir` class.

2.5 Support for plays in verse and line numbering

When dealing with a play in verse, the author must take into consideration not only the specific features of a play but those of verse, too. Of course, the specialities he will deal with will be, generally speaking, different from those encountered when strictly typesetting verse. He will seldom make use of stanzas, for instance, while he will often break a verse line over several physical lines — every time a new character begins to speak in the middle of the verse line itself. Line numbering also might be required.

So, a package for typesetting drama should provide some kind of support for these features. But, in my opinion, there is no need for full internal sup-

port. I thought, indeed, it would be better to rely on the facilities provided by the many extant classes and packages, leaving it to the author to choose from among them the one he finds most suited to the work at hand.

`dramatist`, then, does not define a `verse` environment, but supposes it is already provided by the class (and very usually this supposition is true), or by loading a package such as `verse` or `poemscol`. Since `dramatist` does not deal directly with the specific features of verse, no conflict can arise with a specific `verse` environment,¹ although the author will of course be restricted to the facilities provided by the chosen environment.

As for line numbering, `dramatist` defines three options, provided the `memoir` class or the `verse` package has been loaded. The default is to number verse lines consecutively throughout the entire drama, with no regard to acts and scenes. The other two possibilities are to number verse lines per act or per scene; these can be specified by loading the package with the option `lpna` or `lpns`, respectively. If the required package or class has not been loaded, the option is simply ignored.

Of course, all this is meant only for the `drama*` environment. If the code defined by one of these options is called inside the `drama` environment (i.e., a passage in prose) a warning message will be written to the log file and the option ignored. Generally speaking, line numbering is not very useful for a play in prose; if this is needed, the `lineno` package may provide a workable solution.

2.6 User customization

Everything in the package has been made as customizable as possible by means of user definable commands. In particular, everything concerning the typographical appearance, such as spacing, fonts, and so on, can be adjusted to the user’s taste by means of simple `\renewcommand` or `\setlength` commands.

For example, the default behaviour of the package is to print the act name and number in small caps. Suppose the author wants them printed bold-face; also, he wants to insert a large amount of space before the start of the act. The following lines, inserted in the preamble, perform this task.

```
\renewcommand{\actnamefont}{\bfseries}
\renewcommand{\actnumfont}{\actnamefont}
\setlength{\beforeactskip}{50pt}
```

Or, if the author wants, as for a play in verse, the character name to have a negative indentation:

```
\setlength{\speaksskip}{-1em}
```

¹ There is one exception to this statement; see section 2.4.

Moreover, the user may store his preferred settings in a `dramatist.cfg` file, placed either in the working directory or any directory where \TeX looks for style files, and reuse them in future documents.

3 Examples

Figure 1 shows the output for a play in prose, from Schiller's *The Robbers*; figure 2 shows the input.

Another example is given for a play in verse, taken from the tragedy *Arnaldo da Brescia*. Figure 5 shows the input, while figure 3 shows the output for “Dramatis Personæ” list, and figure 4 the first page of the first act.

References

- Dominici, Massimiliano. “`dramatist.sty`”. Available from CTAN, `macros/latex/contrib/dramatist`, 2003.
- Kaijanaho, Antti-Juhani. “The `plari` document class. Typesetting stageplay scripts with $\LaTeX 2_{\epsilon}$ ”. Available from CTAN, `macros/latex/contrib/plari`, 2003.
- Kilfiger, James. “Typesetting drama with \LaTeX ”. Available from CTAN, `macros/latex/contrib/play`, 1999.
- Swift, Matt. “The drama \LaTeX package”. Available from CTAN, `macros/latex/contrib/frankenstein/unsupported`, 1996.

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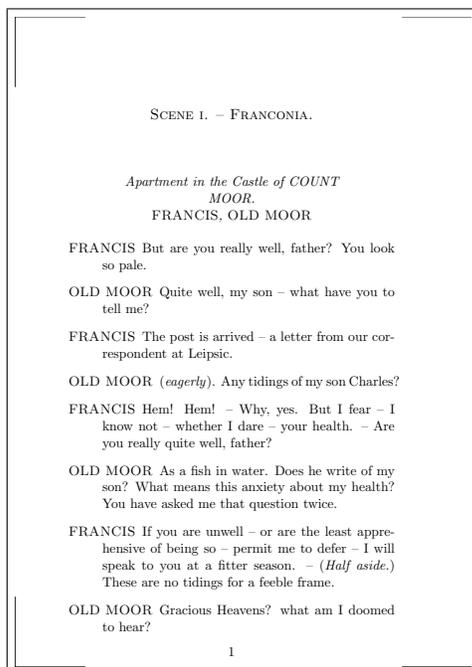


Figure 1: First page of first act of *The Robbers*

```
\documentclass[a5paper,showtrims,11pt]{memoir}
\usepackage{dramatist}

% Layout
\settrimmedsize{18,5cm}{13cm}{*}
\setlength{\trimedger}{\stockwidth}
\addtolength{\trimedger}{-\paperwidth}
\settrims{0pt}{\trimedger}
\settypeblocksize{*}{22pc}{1.71}
\setlrmargins{*}{*}{1.5}
\setulmargins{*}{*}{1}
\setlength{\footskip}{20pt}
\checkandfixthelayout
\ifpdf
\setlength{\pdfpageheight}{\stockheight}
\setlength{\pdfpagewidth}{\stockwidth}
\fi

\renewcommand{\printscenenum}{%
  \scenenumfont \thescene}
\setlength{\beforesceneskip}{20pt}
\pagestyle{plain}

\begin{document}

\Character{MAXIMILIAN, COUNT VON MOOR.}{OLD MOOR}
  {moor}
\Character{FRANCIS, his Sons.}{FRANCIS}{fran}

[...]

\scene[. -- Franconia.]

\StageDir{\begin{center} Apartment in the Castle of
COUNT MOOR.\\ \fran, \moor\end{center}}

\begin{drama}
\franspeaks But are you really well, father?
You look so pale.

\moorspeaks Quite well, my son -- what have
you to tell me?

\franspeaks The post is arrived -- a letter
from our correspondent at Leipsic.

\moorspeaks \direct{eagerly}. Any tidings of my son
Charles?

\franspeaks Hem! Hem! -- Why, yes. But I fear
-- I know not -- whether I dare -- your health.
-- Are you really quite well, father?
[...]
\end{drama}
[...]
\end{document}
```

Figure 2: A play in prose: input code for *The Robbers*

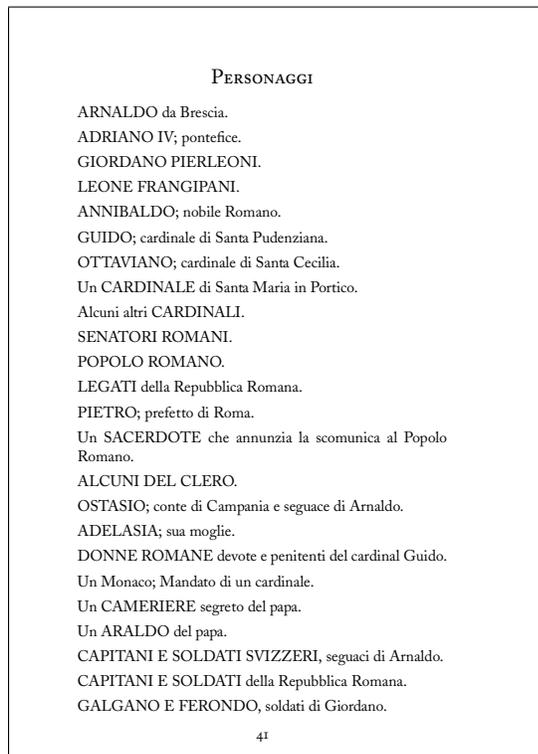


Figure 3: The “Dramatist Personæ” list from *Arnaldo da Brescia*

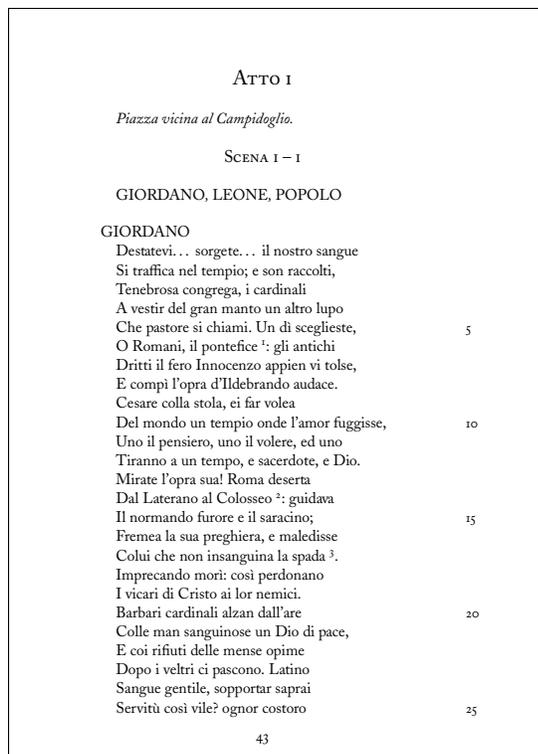


Figure 4: First page of first act of *Arnaldo da Brescia*

```
\documentclass[a5paper,showtrims,11pt]{memoir}
\usepackage[T1]{fontenc}
\usepackage[latin1]{inputenc}
\usepackage[italian]{babel}
\usepackage{dramatist}
\settrimmedsize{18,5cm}{13cm}{*}
\setlength{\trimedge}{\stockwidth}
\addtolength{\trimedge}{-\paperwidth}
\settrims{0pt}{\trimedge}
\settypeblocksize{*}{22pc}{1.71}
\setlrmargins{*}{*}{1.5}
\setulmargins{*}{*}{1}
\setlength{\footskip}{20pt}
\checkandfixthelayout
\ifpdf
\setlength{\pdfpageheight}{\stockheight}
\setlength{\pdfpagewidth}{\stockwidth}
\fi
\frenchspacing
\pagestyle{plain}
```

```
\Character{ARNALDO da Brescia.}{ARNALDO}{arn}
\Character{ADRIANO IV; pontefice.}{ADRIANO}{adr}
\Character{GIORDANO PIERLEONI.}{GIORDANO}{gior}
[...]
\DramPer

\begin{drama*}
\act

\StageDir{Piazza vicina al Campidoglio.}

\scene

\StageDir{\gior, \leo, \popo}

\begin{drama*}
\giorspeaks
Destatevi\dots\ sorgete\dots\ il nostro sangue\\
Si traffica nel tempo; e son raccolti,\\
Tenebrosa congrega, i cardinali\\
A vestir del gran manto un altro lupo\\
Che pastore si chiami. Un di sceglieste,\\
[...]
\end{drama*}
[...]
\end{document}
```

Figure 5: A play in verse: input code for *Arnaldo da Brescia*