

Mama Versus the Mob

An Interactive Dinner Theater
by Gary Corbin

28 March 2008

Setting: Chicago Nightclub, 1927

The event: Gangster boss "Smart" Alex Caponi knows a conspiracy is afoot - someone is trying to take over his mob. But who?

Cast of Characters

"Smart" Alex Caponi, the Boss, isn't as smart as his nickname implies. He took over the mob by force, by killing his own father, just as his father did before him. For this reason, he has never married or had kids of his own. He hasn't a clue who could be out to get him, so he's suspicious of everyone - and he's probably right to be.

"Mama" Mia Mangia, Alex's sister and the club's fabulous chef, wins the hearts of men by sating their stomachs. Unfortunately they don't tend to live very long after they marry her. Several years older than Alex, she is jealous of his "unearned" position as head of the mob. Her right hand is covered in rings from past dead husbands. She is both a tough mob broad - and an affectionate "Mama" who randomly hugs people she doesn't know.

"Wiseguy" Phil Abloni, Alex's right-hand man, is ambitious without cause to be. His wisecracks keep the men smiling. No one knows how he keeps the women smiling. He knows the operation of Caponi's mob better than anyone - including Caponi - but hides it well. Often cleans his nails and picks his teeth with an oversized knife he always seems to carry with him.

Lola Falanova, a jazz-singing diva, packs the club nightly with her sweet voice and sexy style. She knows how to please men while getting her own way. Men do anything for her - except marry her. She speaks in an affected, vaguely Eastern European accent, except when she forgets.

Sissy "Space" Cadet, a sassy young flapper who always seems to know how and where to find booze and men willing to buy it for her. Often makes google-eyes at Abloni, who is clueless to her affections.

Sheila "Sherlock" Homes, the gum-chewing gumshoe who hasn't a clue - nor an ethical bone in her body. Posing as a reporter doing a profile on Caponi, she detects opportunity above all else. She moves fast around the room, constantly taking notes and in general making a nuisance of herself.

Ida B. Goode, Caponi's girlfriend, has been demanding equality for women in the mob's leadership ranks. For her, Chicago is Suffragette City. Younger than Caponi and much smarter (which isn't saying much), she often puffs on an empty cigarette holder and never seems to carry any smokes in her purse. Of course, with the gun in there, there really isn't enough room.

George "Bugsy" Moroni, a charming, rakish gangster from the North side who's had ambitions to take over the whole city - starting with Caponi's mob. Well-dressed and well-coiffed, he may sport a pencil-thin moustache and usually wears too many rings.

Dress and Set

The set is a Prohibition-era "private club," where illicit booze is served to "members" consisting of Chicago's elite, mob loyalists and fans of Lola. There is a stage in front where Lola performs, and a number of tables where customers (the audience and some of the cast) sit to have drinks and dinner during the show. A few grim-looking bouncers guard the doors. There should be a bar off to one side where "members" in the audience can buy drinks if they can convince the barkeep that they are not cops or Treasury agents.

The cast members are dressed for a tony night out in period style. Most will wear hats. Lola in particular, as the star performer, is dressed in a flashy, slinky dress and may flap a boa in people's faces now and then. Caponi is in a tux or fancy suit, but it looks out of place on him. Moroni is dressed to impress, flashier than the other men. All of the men carry guns under their suit jackets, and Sissy, Sheila, and Ida carry them in their purses. Abloni and Moroni carry wads of cash and are very free with it, especially at the bar.

Pre-Show

There should be a mingler before the show where the cast, in character, mingles with the guests, divulging some of their backstory and trying to win the hearts of the guests with whatever wiles are at their disposal. The rivalries, tensions, affections, and other aspects of their relationships should be revealed without stealing fire from the script.

Act One, Scene One

CAPONI, visibly upset, is talking to ABLONI, as IDA hangs on CAPONI's arm, pretending not to eavesdrop.

Caponi

What do you mean, Mrs. Bonavita refused to pay the protection money?

Abloni

She just flat out said "no", Boss. She said we're not protecting her and her grocery store from Moroni's gang, so why should she pay?

Caponi

And so you just left - without the money?

Abloni

What was I supposed to do?

Caponi (*annoyed*)

We're the MOB, Philip. We got *ways*.

Abloni

What am I supposed to do? Break the legs of an old lady?

Caponi (*annoyed*)

Of course not. (*Ponders a moment.*) Push her down a flight of stairs. Let *her* decide which bones to break.

Ida

You do and I'll break your you-know-what, mister!

Caponi

Stay out of this, Ida.

Ida

Don't you shush me, Mister Smart Alex Caponi, or your you-know-what will be you-no-useful anymore, if you know what I mean.

Caponi

We're talking business here. It ain't none of *your* business. Go do something a dame would do, won't ya? Buy us some drinks or something.

Ida

Buy *you* drinks? Ha! Guys buy *me* drinks. And if you don't wanna, I see someone else who will.

(IDA wanders off to flirt with a male customer.)

Caponi

I tell you, Phil. Sometimes I don't know why I keep that girl around.

Abloni

Cuz ya loves her, right?

Caponi

(Smiles, thinking about it and looking at her appreciatively) No, that's not it.

(MAMA MIA enters and interrupts, extremely angry)

Mama Mia

Alex! Alex, my brother, *how* could you do this to me?

Caponi *(cowering)*

Mama Mia - what's... what's wrong?

Abloni

Did someone smoke all the oregano again?

Mama Mia

A hundred and fifty people I need to cook for. A hundred and fifty. And what support do you give me? Nothing! None! *Niente!*

Caponi

What are you talking about? You have cooks, waitresses, this beautiful nightclub...

Mama Mia

And what good are any of them if we don't have any *food*?

Caponi *(turns menacingly to Abloni)*

No food? And why not?

Abloni

Well, I do admit, having no food is a detriment to running a restaurant. But –