

Spring 5-13-2016

## How to be a Misanthrope: Creating the Title Role in Moliere's The Misanthrope

David Cleveland Brown  
*University of New Orleans, New Orleans, dcbrown3@uno.edu*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td>



Part of the [Acting Commons](#), [Other Film and Media Studies Commons](#), [Other Theatre and Performance Studies Commons](#), and the [Performance Studies Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Brown, David Cleveland, "How to be a Misanthrope: Creating the Title Role in Moliere's The Misanthrope" (2016). *University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations*. 2128.  
<https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td/2128>

This Thesis is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by ScholarWorks@UNO with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Thesis in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Thesis has been accepted for inclusion in University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UNO. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@uno.edu](mailto:scholarworks@uno.edu).

How to be a Misanthrope:  
Creating the Title Role in Moliere's  
The Misanthrope

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts  
in  
Film and Theatre  
Performance

by

David Brown

B.A. Brigham Young University, 2007

May, 2016

Copyright 2016, David Brown

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this to my loving and supportive wife Emily Ann Brown. Without her I would never have done any of this.

## **Acknowledgements**

I am grateful for the guidance of the faculty and instructors at the University of New Orleans Department of Film and Theatre, including but not limited to David W. Hoover, Anthony (Tony) French, James Yeargain, Kevin Griffith, Henry Griffin, and John Neisler. The insight, wisdom and support of my fellow graduate students Sarah Beth James, Meghan Shea, Sam Malone, John Neisler, Tiffany Anderson, Arielle Brown, and Vinnie Matthews will always be remembered. I was privileged to work with, and learn from, my fellow students, both graduate and undergraduate. Special thanks must go to my astonishingly supportive wife, Emily Ann Brown and my children who allowed me to be away long nights in rehearsals and long days at school.

## **Table of Contents**

Abstract .....	vi
Biography of Moliere.....	1
The Misanthrope .....	9
Stage Productions.....	10
Modern Adaptations.....	11
Rehearsal Journal .....	12
Class Discussion .....	38
Post-Mortem .....	41
Character Analysis .....	42
Alceste's Backstory .....	42
Bone Structure .....	43
Relationships.....	45
Acting Process .....	48
Practical Acting.....	49
Stanislavsky as Mentor .....	55
Lessons from Stanislavski.....	68
Improvisation Techniques.....	72
The Courage to Create .....	73
Empty Space .....	76
Personal Review of my Work .....	78
Appendix.....	81
Scored Script.....	81
Cast and Crew .....	107
Rehearsal Schedule .....	108
Works Cited .....	112
Vita.....	113

## **Abstract**

This thesis documents my research, rehearsal, and performance of the role of Alceste in Moliere's *The Misanthrope*, which includes, a biography of Moliere, character analysis, role development, a rehearsal journal, character research, acting process, evaluation of my performance, and script analysis. *The Misanthrope* was produced by the UNO Department of Film and Theatre, under the direction of David W. Hoover. The play was performed in the Robert E. Nims Theatre of the Performing Arts Center September 17 - 19, 24 - 26 at 7:30pm, and September 27, 2015 at 2:30pm.

Key Words: Misanthrope; Moliere; Alceste; Acting; David Cleveland Brown; Dreams Come True

## **Moliere**

Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, who was more famously known on stage as Moliere, was a French actor and playwright in the 1600's. One of the great comedic writers of his time, Moliere used comedy as a vehicle to explore taboo topics, such as religion and politics (Taylor 1).

Although Moliere was an accomplished actor during his lifetime his legacy has endured mainly through his work as a playwright. A few of Moliere's plays that are still produced today are *The Misanthrope*, *Tartuffe*, *The Imaginary Invalid*, and *The School for Wives*. Though Moliere lived almost 400 years ago his works have a contemporary value that is brought to life on stage today.

Jean-Baptiste Poquelin was born on January 15, 1622 in Paris, France to Jean Poquelin and Marie Cresse. He was the first of four children. His mother, Marie, died in May, 1632 at the age of 31 when Moliere was just ten years old. After his mother passed away, Moliere moved to Paris with his father for the remainder of his childhood. Moliere's father remarried a year after his mother's death to Catharine Fleurette, but after only three years of marriage and two more children she too passed away. It has been hinted that Moliere's stepmother was the inspiration for Beline, "the heartless, double faced stepmother in *The Imaginary Invalid*" (Taylor 7). His father continued providing for his family as a successful upholsterer and ran his shop from their home in Paris.

Moliere first studied in a Parisian elementary school and was later accepted into the prestigious Jesuit College de Clermont, one of France's best secondary schools at the time. It was here that Moliere practiced Jesuit drama, a stricter form of theatre that assimilated Christian values and Catholic doctrine into its themes. Moliere may have got his first taste of drama at this school but it was unlikely his main focus of study at the time. In 1642, Moliere started studying law with the plan to become a provincial lawyer, a career that was never ultimately realized. Up



until this point it seemed he was following the path his father intended for him, rubbing shoulders with nobility at the College de Clermont and studying a course toward a career in politics (Taylor 17).

In June 1643, at the age of 21, Moliere decided to abandon his current career path and pursue a career as an actor. He moved out of his father's home and co-founded the Illustre Theatre with the actress Madeleine Bejart. Bejart was a young and colorful figure and was said to have already seen “much of the shadowy side of life” (Taylor 24). Moliere and Bejart at first may have been romantically interested in one another, but whether they shared a love interest or not, they undoubtedly shared a love for theatre. After less than two years, the theatre troupe went bankrupt in 1645. By this time Moliere was the head of the troupe, likely due to his natural ability to act and his legal background. The troupe had gone into heavy debt from renting out the theater. Moliere was eventually put in prison for his debt, but a donor paid his debts the next day and he was released. It is suspected that Moliere's father was this donor (Taylor 30). Upon release from prison, he began to go by the pseudonym Moliere (a name possibly originating from a small village in Midi) most likely to prevent his father from dealing with the public scrutiny of having a son who was an actor. Even though at this time acting wasn't necessarily looked down upon, there was still a stigma against the profession. This was illustrated by the fact that actors were still not allowed to be buried on what was considered sacred ground.

Moliere went on to found a new theatre troupe, again with Madeleine, where they performed on a circuit in order to cut down the cost of having to pay for one theatre. This lifestyle and pursuit lasted 12 years. Although Moliere mainly acted during this time he also began to write his own plays. Only a few of his plays survived during this period of his life. These plays displayed Moliere's talent for mockery and showed that he was going away from the

tropes and influence of the comedy movement of the time, the improvisational Commedia Dell'arte. His writing during this period also show that Moliere began to abandon the idea of religion. This abandonment caused him to create enemies, including his former friend and governor, Armand, Prince of Conti, a member of a few influential religious organizations at the time. However, this also allowed Moliere to develop friendships with other like-minded non-religious individuals such as the famous playwright Jean Racine.

In 1658 Moliere began his return to the main stages of Paris. He started by performing on the outskirts of Paris and to promote himself with society gentlemen in order to build his reputation and let word of mouth feed into the city. Soon he was performing for the king at the Louvre, which was then rented out as a theatre space. He performed in Corneille's tragedy *Nicomede* and the farcical *Le Docteur Amoureux*. The king awarded him with the title *Troupe de Monsieur*. With the help of this new title of Monsieur, his theatre company began to perform at the Petit-Bourbon rotating evenings with the famous Italian Commedia Dell'arte company, including the celebrated Tiberio Fiorillo, an actor famous for playing the character Scaramouche. Moliere's play *The Affected Young Ladies* premiered at the Petit-Bourbon on November 18, 1659. This was Moliere's first time publicly satirizing social mannerisms common amongst the French at this time.

While Moliere personally preferred tragedy and tirelessly promoted his tragedies, it was his farces that gained considerably more notice. His farces were typically one act plays that followed the performance of the tragedy. Many of the farces followed the style of Commedia Dell'arte which included improvisation and a vague outline of the plot. Moliere also wrote comedies in verse and musical comedies, where the play was often interrupted by song and dance.

Moliere learned techniques of the Commedia Dell'arte from Fiorillo. In 1660 his play *The Imaginary Cuckold* seemed to be a tribute to Commedia Dell'arte and Fiorillo. However, Moliere's style with themes of marriage and his pessimistic view of how false human relationships can be are found throughout the play. This viewpoint is more pronounced in his later works and influenced many other authors during the time. In a string of plays, affectionately called his Jealousy series, Moliere illustrates these relationships as a kind of dance where two couples accuse each other of being betrayed by the other's partner.

In 1660, the Petit-Bourbon was shut down and demolished to allow expansion of the Louvre. Moliere moved his company to an abandoned theatre in the Palais-Royal that he renovated and opened on January 10, 1661. Moliere wrote and performed *The Jealous Prince*, *The School for Husbands*, and *Les Facheux* during this time for Nicolas Fouquet who commissioned Moliere to perform them.

In 1661 Moliere introduced the *comedies-ballets*, a transitional form of dance performance that was developing during the advent of the proscenium stage. Moliere created this form by accident when he was commissioned to put on both a play and ballet in honor of Louis XIV. Moliere realized that he did not have a big enough ensemble to cast performers for both a play and a ballet so he combined them, allowing performers to catch their breath and change costume. This gutsy move paid off and Moliere ended up being asked to produce 12 more *comedies-ballets* before he died. The *comedies-ballets* integrated dance and music with the action of the play. This separated these performances from the ballets of the time in that it was both the actor and the dancer that contributed to advancing the plot of the story.

Moliere married Armande Bejart on February 20, 1662. He believed her to be Madeliene's sister but it was speculated that Bejart was Madeleine's illegitimate daughter with

the Duke of Modena (Taylor 170). In the same year, Moliere premiered *The School for Wives*, considered by many to be a masterpiece. It ridiculed the fact that little education was given to daughters of wealthy families and reflected many aspects of Moliere's own marriage. This play garnered considerable protest and criticism. Moliere responded with a play that mocks his critics. The play entitled *La Critique de "L'Ecole des Femmes"* had fictional characters at a dinner party criticizing the actual play *The School for Wives*. Moliere cleverly had the characters argue amongst themselves for a time about the play but never in a serious tone and mocking more the viewers than the play itself.

The contents of his plays were not the only criticism Moliere received, as his politics and personal life were also raising concerns. A group formed amongst the French high society began to protest Moliere's work for its excessive realism and irreverence. They attacked Moliere and accused him of being married to his own daughter (Taylor 197). Moliere was gaining many enemies, but was protected by the king who supported the author by granting him a pension and was even godfather to Moliere's first son (Taylor 201).

In 1664, *Tartuffe* was performed at Versailles. This play caused the greatest censure of Moliere's artistic career. It depicts the hypocrisy of the upper class, who were outraged by the play and strongly contested it (Taylor 217). Eventually the play was banned. Even though Moliere was favored by the king, the king suggested to Moliere to suspend performances of *Tartuffe*. Moliere responded by writing another play called *Dom Juan ou le Festin de Pierre*, which tells the story of an atheist who becomes religious. His conversion is not genuine but rather a hypocritical one, however, and in consequence God punishes him. This play too was quickly suspended.

In 1666, *The Misanthrope* was produced. It is now considered one of Moliere's best plays, but did not gain much notice by the public at the time and ended up being a commercial failure. In an effort to recover from the financial loss, Moliere wrote *The Doctor Despite Himself*, which was a satire against the sciences. This play was met with success. Moliere had a tendency to depict physicians as arrogant individuals who spoke Latin, although poorly, in order to impress others with false erudition.

In 1667, Moliere tried to perform a revised version of *Tartuffe* under the title *Panulphe*, but it was banned by the archbishop. It wasn't until years later that *Tartuffe* was recognized by the king and unbanned. In 1668, Moliere became ill and began writing less. His next work *The Confounded Husband* was met with little success, but *The Miser*, which followed that was better received. At this time, he began to use music again in his work, such as in *The Middle Class Gentleman*, another of his works considered to be a masterpiece.

In 1672 Madeleine Bejart died. Moliere suffered from this loss and his own worsening illness. Nevertheless, he wrote *Scapin's Deceits* and *The Learned Ladies*, the latter being one of his more acclaimed plays. His final play *The Imaginary Invalid* was written in 1673. In the fourteen years that Moliere lived in Paris he wrote 31 plays and acted in 85.

Moliere died of pulmonary tuberculosis, possibly contracted during his brief imprisonment, on February 17, 1673 at the age of 51. His death has become something of a legend. While performing in his final play *The Imaginary Invalid* he collapsed on stage in a fit of coughing and hemorrhaging, but he insisted on completing his performance. After the play, Moliere collapsed again, this time with a larger hemorrhage. He was taken home and died a few hours later. The French law stated that actors could not be buried in the sacred ground of a cemetery. Moliere's widow, Armande, requested that the king allow her husband to be buried at

a normal funeral at night. The king acquiesced and Moliere's body was buried in a spot of the cemetery that was reserved for unbaptized infants.

During Moliere's life, conventional thinkers, religious leaders, and medical professionals criticized his life and his works, but their influence largely didn't effect his success with the public. Many playwrights and companies began to copy Moliere's style in England and France. During the 18th century, his works continued to find appeal in England but experienced declining interest in his home country. In the 19th century, however, during the French Restoration, Moliere's comedies found resurgence in popularity among the public and critics. Romantics admired his plays and 20th century scholars studied his works. Author Martha Bellinger says this about the legacy of Moliere:

Moliere has been accused of not having a consistent, organic style, of using faulty grammar, of mixing his metaphors, and of using unnecessary words for the purpose of filling out his lines. All these things are occasionally true, but they are trifles in comparison to the wealth of character he portrayed, to his brilliancy of wit, and to the resourcefulness of his technique. He was unaware of sensibility or pathos; but in place of pathos he had melancholy, a puissant and searching melancholy, which strangely sustains his inexhaustible mirth and his triumphant gaiety. (Bellinger 178)

Moliere left a legacy distinct from that of other writers. "Many attempts have been made to liken him to Shakespeare; yet such comparisons, if not odious, are at best idle. Shakespeare wrote tragedy and romantic comedy; Moliere, naturalistic comedy and farce" (Taylor 356). Like Alceste in *The Misanthrope* Moliere was a "highly minded philosopher who felt it his duty to

expose the vices of society” (Taylor 356). Moliere’s works exposing the vices of society show that his ideas and writing are just as applicable today as they were in his time.

## **The Misanthrope**

Moliere wrote *The Misanthrope* or *The Cantankerous Lover* as a comedy in verse (several translations such as the one used for our play are written in prose). It was first performed on June 4, 1666 by the King's Players at the Theatre du Palais-Royal. The play is a satire on the mannerisms of French high society and points out the flaws of human sociality. The play is unique in that Moliere focused on character development, creating more dynamic characters than the more commonly used shallow ones seen at the time in Commedia Dell-Arte. Even compared to other of Moliere's own works, it is a turn from a more plot oriented style. Although *The Misanthrope* was not as popular during its time it has survived as one of Moliere's best known plays.

Prior to *The Misanthrope*, two of Moliere's plays, *Tartuffe* and *Don Juan*, were banned by the French government. Because of this, Moliere may have suppressed certain criticisms in *The Misanthrope*. Although Alceste could be viewed in a positive light for having a strict moral code, he is often portrayed as an imbecile for having too unrealistic expectations.

Moliere seems to have written Alceste as a model of his own current circumstances and Celimene as a character representing his then current wife who may have been cheating on him at the time.



## Stage Productions

There have been five productions on Broadway

1. 1905, April 10-15: This was the very first Broadway production of *The Misanthrope* performed at the New Amsterdam Theatre. Richard Mansfield starred as Alceste.
2. 1957, February 7-9: This production was performed in French at the Winter Garden Theatre.
3. 1968-1969, October 9 - April 26: Richard Easton starred as Alceste at the Lyceum Theatre with Brian Bedford as Acaste, Christina Pickles as Celimene, Sydney Walker as Philinte, Keene Curtis as Oronte, and directed by Stephen Porter. The translation was by Richard Wilbur
4. 1975, March 12 - May 31: Alec McCowen starred as Alceste at the St. James Theatre with Nicholas Clay as Acaste, Diana Rigg as Celimene, Robert Eddison as Philinte, and directed by John Dexter. The play was adapted by Tony Harrison
5. 1983, January 27 - March 27: Brian Bedford starred as Alceste at the Circle in the Square Theatre with Carole Shelley as Arsinoe, Mary Beth Hurt as Celimene, Stanley Tucci as Dubois, and directed by Stephen Porter. This production also used the Richard Wilbur translation.

## Modern Adaptations

Tony Harrison wrote an adaptation in 1973 which was updated and revived later in 2010. Liz Lochhead adapted the play set in the early years of the Scottish Parliament satirizing the Scottish Labour Party's relationship with the media. Robert Cohen's 2006 translation in heroic couplets received praise and has been popular in productions staged by his former students. Keith Fowler staged Cohen's version in 2011 for UC Irvine's celebration of Cohen's fifty years at the university.

*The Grouch* was written by Ranjit Bolt and first performed at West Yorkshire Playhouse in 2008. It is a more modern verse version of *The Misanthrope* set in contemporary London and using modernized names (e.g. Alan instead of Alceste and Celia instead of Celimene). In 1999, Uma Thurman and Roger Rees starred in a contemporary version by Martin Crimp and directed by Barry Edelstein. The Comedy Theatre produced Crimp's version starring Keira Knightley and Damian Lewis in 2009. Roger McGough premiered his adaptation at the Liverpool Playhouse performed by the English Touring Theatre in February 2013. McGough's adaptation is in verse with Alceste's dialogue in prose.

## **Rehearsal Journal**

3/19

I am beginning to discover pieces in my character's puzzle. I'm finding that his character's arc is directly correlated with his feelings for and relationship with Celimene. There is little to no change in his core beliefs from the beginning of the play to the end. He doesn't change his ideal throughout the play. There are some inconsistencies in his own ideology depending on whom he's speaking with however. Alceste admits to Oronte about himself that he is "too frank." This is an admission of fault in himself showing that he recognizes he is not completely correct in what he does. He is very aware of his own personality which is not necessarily a moral concern. Alceste's arc moves according to his relationship with Celimene and his interaction with her. This play is very character driven rather than plot driven. Before this first entry, I have been making notes and observations directly on my script.

5/18

Gained insight that Alceste may act differently depending on who his audience is and whom he's speaking to. For example, to Philinte he is overly candid and harsh because he feels comfortable around him. With Oronte, however, he is far more reserved with his feelings. Alceste's relationship with Celimene is comfortable but quite harsh. It has a similarity with his relationship to Philinte except the major difference is that he is in love with Celimene.

7/31

I've spent the summer memorizing my lines and discovering new meaning and more advanced understanding of the text and of the situations and circumstances of the play. I'm

learning how difficult it is for me to memorize lines because I lose focus easily. I am trying a variety of methods to memorize my lines. Tonight I am going to try writing the text and saying it out loud as I write. My hope is that my left and right brain work together to make connections and not only memorize but ingest the lines.

(Here I wrote down long lines of dialogue and spoke them aloud as I wrote them.)

8/15

First read-through coming back from the break. Missing several characters. My goal was to get through as much during the read through from memory as I could. I am also focused on making character choices as I memorize. This was a note David Hoover, the director of *The Misanthrope*, gave me when he directed me in another play during my second year. I played Heck Tate in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. He said I needed to make character choices while I was working to get off-book. This requires multitasking, which is something I'm working to get better at. I'm quite good at focusing on one thing and blocking out everything else. So I'm striving to do this and develop the character as I memorize. I am going to have choices ready and be free on stage to allow the process of developing the character to happen.

8/18

First rehearsal going through the first scene. I've spent a lot of time on this first scene and wanted to be completely off book for this first rehearsal. I had a good idea of Alceste's relationship with Philinte. They are close with one another and are comfortable in each other's company. Alceste can let loose on Philinte without worrying that he'll offend him and Philinte

can be equally candid back. I was given a lot of good notes from the director during the rehearsal process.

Another goal I had was to be free and make choices: in blocking, in movement, and in character. I feel I accomplished my goal. The director allowed me to be free on stage and make choices and follow my instincts. The actor playing Philinte seemed to be more reserved and this oddly gave me a sense of freedom to be as free as I could be in order to show him that it's okay to try stuff and to get out of your shell. I wonder if this can be incorporated into our characters relationship onstage somehow.

8/19

My goal for this second rehearsal was to continue the work from the first rehearsal. I felt I hit the ground running last rehearsal and wanted to continue that momentum today. There were some hang-ups but for the most part I continued making choices and discoveries. Tonight I discovered more about the character of Alceste and how he views the world and interacts with the other characters. I do not see Alceste as someone who hates the world and hates human nature, but rather someone who cares too much. I feel like this makes his character more human. I'll keep playing with this and see if it works. But if he cares too much then that will allow his outbursts to have more meaning. He is constantly disappointed by the faults and weaknesses of others. He thinks he can cure the world and help everyone be good - according to his standard of what good is. It finally gets so overwhelming for him that he has no other choice but to leave mankind.

8/22

Saturday rehearsal. I was excited to start working with more of the actors. We are still missing some roles, which concerns me. However, I need to trust the director will figure that out and then move forward focusing on what I can control. Rehearsal today was good but I felt like it was a little clunky. It didn't run as smoothly as the other rehearsals thus far. Actors stopped a lot to look at lines and weren't freeing up themselves to the rehearsal process, being more focused on the logistics of the acting rather than the relationship in the scene. This is to be expected this early in the game since we're only a few rehearsals in. Also, when more actors are added to rehearsal there is more the director must look at as well. My character is the lead in the play however it is becoming apparent that my performance will receive less attention than some of the other less experienced actors in this play.

I'm gaining insight into Alceste. His relationship with everyone around him is very judgmental. He is quick to judge anything that walks on two legs. Why does he do this? I think it is partly out of frustration. He observes those around him are not as concerned with improving themselves as Alceste is. He holds everyone to the standard that they need to strive for perfection in humanity, whatever perfection means. He is frustrated with the complacency he sees around him. People are content with their human frailties. It is his mission to combat this notion in society.

8/24

I am not fully connected with my character yet. I spent rehearsal today trying to find that connection with my character. I'm not entirely sure why I don't feel as connected as I want to. What am I missing about his character that will help me understand him better? I do have the sense my performance is an outward one at this point and that gives me a sense of unease. But I

guess that comfort is not necessarily the goal. A compelling performance is a better goal. Maybe comfort does not contribute. Maybe it does. Either way I want to connect more with my character and I don't feel that connection yet. When I say I want to connect more with my character I mean I feel like my acting is more in the outward physicality and not very much coming from inside of me. It's more of an outward performance rather than having an understanding of why my character does what he does. So I will work on my script analysis to find places to further connect with Alceste and trust this work will contribute to my overall goal of giving an entertaining and compelling performance that contributes to the overall play and lifts the other actors around me. Hopefully what I bring to the table can improve those around me rather than bring things down.

Despite my insecurities and worries, I am encouraged by what I have gained. I am starting to know this character. I wonder how I can become more like this character in my performance. I'm seeking this out.

8/25

I have had an aversion to an outward performance and lately I've felt false in my line delivery. One thing I have been mindful of is to not be falsely sing-songy when I deliver my lines. I watched Benedict Cumberbatch's performance in BBC's adaptation of *Sherlock Holmes* before rehearsal. Hoover told me last practice that I should look into embodying how much of a jerk Sherlock Holmes is but also discover how the audience loves and roots for him. This is similar to how Alceste is written. As I was watching and studying *Sherlock* before rehearsal, I realized that he does not put much affectation in his lines. And he has a lot of lines. They are powerful because he delivers them with meaning but doesn't overly flower them. I tried this approach tonight. I had some success. When there isn't much inflection in the tone of a voice

you run the risk of being boring. Toward the end of rehearsal however I started to focus less on HOW I was delivering my lines but focused more on what was I feeling and to honestly react according to how I was feeling. Sometimes feelings came from something another actor was giving me and sometimes I felt Alceste would respond to what they were saying in a certain way.

After I'm off-book my ultimate goal is to be totally free on stage to follow what my heart tells me. I'm nervous that I won't be amazing and entertaining and funny. It's true. These thoughts and feeling surge through my body. I realize this is detrimental to a good performance and I would very much prefer to not think this way. However, these things are concerns of mine whether I want them to be or not. Maybe therapy might do the trick! But I feel like I can't fake a good performance. Instead, I have to trust that being honest and prepared will give me what I need to give a meaningful performance and alleviate any concern of others reaction to my performance.

8/26

Overall rehearsal went well. I enjoy getting on stage and being free with my character. The lines are very difficult and that is challenging and fun. I enjoy learning the meaning behind what Alceste says. I am self-conscious about my ability to memorize as I do not consider myself very good at it. This role requires me to memorize very long lines of dialog that are archaic and difficult. The way this play is written is not how someone in 2015 would speak.

During rehearsal I noticed when I was putting too much emphasis on what I was doing. I was able to change to relax my body and interact and react according to my feelings. This felt so much better as an actor and I felt like I gave so much more in my performance. I wasn't stiff in my body and posture and I wasn't in my head as an actor. But rather I was free to move and be the character on stage. It is a lovely feeling. I hope to be able to find this in myself more and



more. The ultimate goal being that when the play is ready to go up I am in the moment from start to finish, rather than being concerned who is in the audience and how they are judging my performance. Instead I want to be free of that and live moment to moment. Hopefully that translates into a richer performance.

Alceste's character is somewhat of a stiff. If I am too comfortable on stage and I don't think it will do justice to my character. Alceste does have a sense of comfort about him, however, and he is very comfortable being direct and blunt with people and being honest with others regarding what he thinks of them. My quest for honesty and reality on stage is leading me to seek a comfortability and a more inwardly driven performance. I am still seeking an outward physicality that would be right for Alceste. His posture I feel is something that is probably more relaxed than others. He is less concerned with being outwardly attractive and I think his posture is probably more relaxed because of this. However, there is a stiffness in his movement as he is out to take on the world and feels this great burden on his shoulders.

8/27

Tonight's rehearsal was fun. I was able to free myself more in my movement with my upper body. My lower body still feels somewhat stiff and unnatural, which causes me to stroll and drag my feet rather than move purposefully. I understand that confidence in myself is a key factor here. It could also be a combination of nerves and being trained as a film actor to plant myself for the camera. Either way I was able to free myself up a lot by just letting myself go as well as Hoover allowing me to do Karate moves on stage. I'm excited to do that in the play, just throw out a punch to the air here and kick to the side there.

The director has a vision for this play. I am grateful he has a vision and knows what the actors need to do for the whole production. As an actor I am so focused on my character and performance. It is a good setup to have a director who is in charge of seeing the bigger picture. Hoover has a vision for the acting to appear and sound a certain way. He'll give notes on the voice such as, "It needs to go up here, and up here, and then down on your point." He gives notes on changing tactics and how that is manifested and on what breathing might look like. Being able to articulate what the acting should look like shows he has a vision of overall play. As an actor I must take these notes and find out what is inside of me that can cause me to naturally produce these results. I won't fall into the trap of being false with sheer affectation, but rather find how I can instinctively and truthfully get to the heart of the matter. Actions are a good way to find that truthful performance. As long as I am not in my head trying to remember what my action is for each line, an action gives purpose and focus in the performance. I seek to be out of my head as much as possible during my performance so thinking of what my action should be can put me in my head. If I have my action understood, then rather than being in my head, I will be in the moment reacting to my partner and working to achieve my character's overall goal. Throughout rehearsal I am going to try to keep my performance as real as I can while taking direction to look, appear or behave a certain way. I can do this by translating an outward action into understanding my character's motivation in the scene to do such a thing.

8/29

I broke a glass today. It cut my hand. We had to stop rehearsal. Got back into rehearsal. Lines still an issue for me. Balancing between real performance and affectation. Like Alceste says he wants sincerity not affectation. I want my performance to resemble that.

8/31

I was tired at practice and it showed in my performance. I am putting a lot on my performance, such as yelling and gestures. The character is a big character and I want to keep my performance grounded and natural. There are two schools of thought in regards to finding a truthful and real performance. One is to nail down all the outward parts such as movement, voice, costume, etc. Another is understanding the characters motivation and relationships to inform the presentation. I think there is truth in both approaches and a combination of the two is probably the best option. However, the latter rings truer to me in regards to performance. I desire to be present in every scene and respond and react as humanly as possible. My assessment of rehearsal tonight is that I didn't do very well being natural. This is due to me being in my head with remembering lines, blocking, and choices. I hope to get beyond lines and know my blocking well enough so that I can be more present and free in the scene.

Alceste is starting to become clearer to me. As I strive to improve myself as an actor in general I am also finding ways to perform this character. This experience is really having me focus on how to be a good actor and also how to play this specific character, both of which are going to help me in the long run. I see Alceste as having an inward battle on stage. He does censor himself despite the fact that he's incredibly blunt. He is not always as blunt as he could be and doesn't always say everything he feels. An example of this is in the scene with Oronte. He

avoids criticizing him at first but Oronte is overbearing in his demand for Alceste's approval that Alceste finally gives in.

9/2

I only had one scene tonight for about 30 minutes. A short rehearsal for me. I thought I had my lines down but I messed them up more than I thought I would. It's because I was intimidated by Meghan Shea. She is a strong performer and has her idea of how scenes should go. Because I recognize this in her I am nervous about messing up her idea of what the scene should be. I recognized these nerves quickly and battled to find confidence by telling myself what Alceste needed to do in the scene was just as important, if not more. Surprisingly I felt like she respected this. At first I could tell she wasn't expecting me to mirror her power but after the initial shock she seemed more at ease in the scene. If I would have let my intimidation get the best of me it wouldn't have been as good a rehearsal. This is a great lesson for me. By entering a scene with confidence and respecting myself as an actor it will make the situation much better than if I were coming from a nervous and intimidated place.

This scene with Arsinoe is a curious one for me. It's a rare moment when Alceste isn't candid at all but placates Arsinoe's feelings. Is it because he feels bad for her? Why would he spare her feelings and not anyone else's? It's interesting. I don't really know why yet.

9/3

Tonight's rehearsal was interesting and I did a good job of having my lines down. My main goal was to be able to understand my character well enough that I acted appropriately in the scene and was driven by what was happening in it. My assessment is that I did okay at this but not great. I did well at having meaning in every word I said, rather than just spouting lines

because it was my character's turn to speak. I knew what I was saying and why I was saying it. However, I was giving an outward performance because rather than being present for my partner and listening, I was focused more on what I was doing. I've realized it startles me when a scene becomes truthful and real. It's a beautiful thing when that happens but it's surprisingly startling. There is a part of me that knows it's going well and I become embarrassed. I know, that's weird, but when I think people are impressed with what I'm doing it makes me nervous. Also, there is another part of me that becomes worried I may lose control of my performance. I will lose consciousness of the audience and therefore won't know if they are making fun of or criticizing me. Being in the moment and out of my head is scary because I lose sight of the audience and am no longer anticipating their judgments. Anticipating people's judgments of me is a defense mechanism I need to let go of if I want to improve my performance.

I am learning that Alceste may not really care what people think about him. At first I thought it was a defense mechanism but I am starting to think that maybe he genuinely doesn't care. I am not completely convinced of this however. He really fights back when people attack him. He also accepts Philinte's criticisms of him in the end of the play. Hmmm, I'll discover more of this.

9/4

Tonight we went through Act V. Act V is the act I am the least comfortable with. Hoover called in sick so we just ran lines and blocking. Unfortunately it got out of hand. I did not have my lines down as well as I would have liked so I tried to stay off book and at least say the meaning of my lines even if I didn't have them down exactly. I wanted to do this so that I could still find moments in the scenes we ran. It was a lighter mood tonight without a director. Sadly some of the other actors took it to another level by speaking when it wasn't their line. I think

they saw I wasn't saying my lines exactly and took it to mean I was goofing off so it gave them license to go overboard. Anyway, it felt like mass chaos and I'll have my lines down better for tomorrow.

I was frustrated people were so silly tonight, but I think it was good. It's good to have that levity and not be so serious. Not taking oneself too seriously is a virtue I suspect. One I seek. Alceste takes himself waaaaaay too seriously. Everything is life or death with him. He needs to take a chill pill.

9/5

First run through of the whole play. I was able to make my way through with only calling for lines here and there. We go up in a week and a half! So I still have time to solidify my performance and find moments of truth. I just tried to hit my cues and get my lines right. There was parts that felt meaningful and parts that were less than truthful. I have a deep desire to give a truthful performance and enjoy being in the moment without worrying about what people are watching in the background. I want to be able to forget about what others are thinking and give the play its due justice. It is a comedy so I want to have a light feeling and underscore my performance with a sense of fun. Fun in the banter. Fun in the arguments and wordplay. Playing the game. I'm very nervous if people come and see it and they think I'm a very bad actor. I'm nervous that my parents will wonder what I've spent the last two years doing. That I over-act, or am not entertaining or that the play just drags on. All these things scare me. I can't let my nerves get the best of me. I can focus on having my lines down, making strong choices, being in the moment, and not worry about the rest.

I haven't mapped out Alceste's arc completely yet. This play is very character driven and not so much plot driven. Alceste is a deep complex character. But what is his journey? I get that

he has a turn at the end when Celimine rejects his proposal to flee humankind together. What leads up to this and what are the changes in him along the way? My actions I've chosen help me map this but it's still eluding me somewhat. I'm seeking this arc to be clearer. I have moments in every scene that are important to Alceste. How do all these moments tie in with one another for a nice clean arc?

9/7

I had a simple goal tonight. Don't stroll! And I succeeded! The director even gave me the note after that he wanted more strolling specifically when I have my rant at the end. It felt good to plant and deliver. I am working on being free enough to allow myself to move if I feel the impulse to do so. Also, my other goal is to listen to the other actors. I feel like I did this. However, it ended up feeling like I was just standing and staring. So then I thought, I need to move around rather than stand and stare. So then I'd start making false facial reactions. Additionally the language is so weird that I really have to listen to understand everything. So listening is something I need to work more on and not act like I'm listening but really hear what they are saying and see what they are doing.

I enjoy listening and reacting to the other actors. Alceste really does listen to what people have to say. Unfortunately if they misspeak he will pounce on them as quick as a tiger. An Alceste Tiger.

9/8

I felt much better about my performance tonight. I was reacting to my fellow actors and lived more freely in the moment. When I say that I was living freely in the moment I mean that I was not in my head worrying about what others think. I was listening to my fellow actors and

responding to them in a way that felt truthful and real. This was at the cost of correct lines and blocking unfortunately. So now I just combine it all for a stellar performance. I will review my lines and get them into my soul and understand where my character needs to end up so that those things will not get in the way of my performance. There is one scene where I cared more about karate moves than being real. I can fix that. In that scene I will need to tackle the reality of it and why my character would do those moves. So far so good. I wish I was a phenomenal actor but I do not consider myself as such. I wish I was very funny, but again, I don't see it. What I can do is understand what my character is saying and what his relationship is with the other characters. I can know what my character wants in the scene. These things are in my control and I hope to have them down solidly and live in the moment and enjoy the performance.

I am starting to see that some of Alceste's scenes are more important than others. This might be a deadly thought. It's better to see every scene as crucial I think. Alceste doesn't really have a journey in some scenes and he seems kind of one note at times. Sometimes I think, "Alceste, take it easy man. You can lay off people a bit." I am the character so I'll find out how to incorporate what is needed for the character.

9/9

I felt like tonight was my worst performance in a rehearsal thus far. I focused on all the notes the director has given me and focused on implementing them. But in doing so I felt disconnected and focused on the movement of the play rather than being connected with the living play. My goal tomorrow is to focus more on relationships and make clear choices in scenes where I feel completely lost. I felt lost for most of the scenes and didn't know what I was doing or why I was there. I felt for a moment that I was just spewing out the lines. Lines are



continuing to be an issue for me despite going over and over them. I think my brain just needs a break and some rest.

All this line memorization and rehearsal is fatiguing me. When I get fatigued I become impatient. Stay strong and work through it!

9/10

I had my best performance of the play so far tonight. I felt great about it. I spent hours today looking over scenes where I felt lost. I made goals and objectives for each scene and thought about Alceste's relationship with the other characters. Even though there were some line issues I felt connected with my scene partners. I wanted something in each scene and went about achieving those things. It was real and felt very good. I was proud of my performance. I made choices I was proud of and for the first time gained some hope that I might actually do well when the play goes up and feel proud about it.

During notes after rehearsal the director said he preferred last night's performance over this one. This was confusing because I honestly felt ashamed of my performance last night and probably wouldn't feel good putting something like that up for others to see. The director, understandably, gave me several adjustments last night during notes because my performance needed work. Tonight, even though I felt good about what I did, I received more redirection. This is good. Even when I feel like I've done well I still cannot see myself. It may feel right but the director knows what the overall play needs. A stand-out performance could distract from the play if it doesn't fit with the overall story or vision. I'm pretty critical of myself. Sometimes I think that it's probably more productive for me to receive input about what works rather than what doesn't work. But that is just me and I need to learn to work with all types of directors and get over myself. If I were a little kinder to myself I would build a bigger buffer for outward

criticism. I cannot control how a director might direct so I can only work on bettering myself to be amiable in all situations.

The other issue I need to work on and get better at is receiving sarcastic remarks with more grace. I typically work better with people who are direct rather than sarcastic. But to everyman his own. This is just me and I know everyone has their own way of approaching things and I should be understanding of that. These notes tonight have caused me great introspection. I realize I struggle when someone reenacts something an actor did on stage, making light of their acting, to show them what they did was not the most optimal choice. I have a hard time seeing how this is constructive. I suppose some actors respond well to this but I fail to see much value in it. I feel like the theatre should be a place where people feel welcome to try new things and make mistakes and not fear ridicule. Sometimes pointing out funny things is good and builds comradery but only if the actor is able to see the humor in it I think.

I found an issue with my quest for truth and realism: I wasn't establishing that the play was a comedy. I need to work on this. Find a way to be truthful and connected, but still be comedic. That is a very difficult thing to do but I accept the challenge. My goal tonight was not necessarily to be funny but to be connected, so after finding that connection I can search for the comedy to add on top of that. Comedy should be based in reality and my performance tonight was the most real I've felt so far but there still needs to be levity and lightness in it all. The relationships should still be genuine and then maybe the circumstances and dialogue will inform the comedy. I don't think establishing this play as a comedy means that I over-act. I think large gestures can be funny but only if they are either well-crafted or natural. By well-crafted I mean that you have studied what has worked in the past and why such gestures work. With this knowledge you can begin to craft what gestures go where and test to see if they work.

I put on a performance tonight I felt very proud of but now I need to add in the comedy somehow. I'm having a difficult time reconciling this but I'm sure I'll figure it out.

There are many notes that are constructive and enlightening and most criticisms aren't harmful. I am not a precious flower, though I tend to make things too precious and take myself too seriously. I will keep the gains I made tonight. My goal is to continue to work on clarifying my objectives in the scenes and my relationships with the other characters and all the while trying to figure out how to make this a comedy. I know you can't please everyone but I'll do my best.

Actions are a way to clarify an actor's intentions. If something isn't clear, or isn't entertaining it's important to pose the question, "What's your action?" It clarifies to the actor what they're intention is. This will put an actor in their head for a time as they try to resolve this and think about what their action is and how they are going to do that action. If the action is to seduce then one must ask oneself, "What does it mean to seduce? How do I seduce? I can look longingly at them and slowly move toward them. Why would my character do this?" If an actor concentrates on the outward appearance of an action it can produce an affected performance that focuses on the externals rather than what's going on inside of the actor. An action should rather inform the actor of their motivation and why they are striving to accomplish their action. Knowing your actions are great for clarity in the play and understanding the actor's intent. They can help get at the heart of a truthful performance. Another way to do this is to ask why. Why does the character say what they are saying? Why are they doing what they are doing? Because they love, or they're afraid, or whatever. Why are they in love or afraid? What causes this? How do they overcome this, or accentuate it, or whatever. Knowing actions can be incredibly valuable. Actually, I think knowing the major action or objective is incredibly valuable (an

action for each point can be overbearing and distracting). Actions are good but as an actor I can't stop there. After I know my intention I need to find out why. And the answer to that comes from knowing the relationship and living in the moment. The director understandably wants a determined and well-crafted performance where decisions are made and actions understood. Now, it is my job as an actor to create a truthful and real performance that goes deeper than the externals. I think that one should do all the research, understanding the actions even, but then live in the moment of the play and be free within the given circumstances, including blocking.

This has been an experience for me to find what helps my performance and what doesn't. I feel passionate about what I've written tonight but I have a tendency to cut deeper and be more negative than is helpful or constructive. Past issues maybe. Also I might be extra sensitive tonight because I'm tired and exhausted. Either way, rant over.

I mentioned that I studied scenes and made some choices before rehearsal. One discovery I made was in my scenes with Celimine and Philinte I decided to play around with my relationship with them to really be more loving. It was interesting how my relationship with them changed and how I reacted to them. I am going to continue to play with this. Another scene I made specific choices about was my scene with Oronte. I decided to play a little. Maybe Alceste was having fun with Oronte and toying with him a little. He enjoys a battle of wits and welcomed the opportunity to demonstrate his intellectual superiority.

9/12

The break yesterday was much needed. After writing my Thursday rant I am learning and realizing more about what I wrote. I have come to the realization that actions are super helpful to me if I put them in context of my relationship with the other person. With Philinte I tried "to befriend" him and I realized it helped me to connect more with him. That may not be the right

choice but the action helped me improve my connection with my fellow actor. With Celimene I chose “to love.” Again, it helped me connect more with her. I have written down actions for each point I make which helps in scene study and to clarify the beats my character goes through but when I’m performing I am not thinking about my action for each thing I say otherwise I am in my head. And when I’m in my head I am embarrassed about my performance. So I need to do all my homework, write down my actions, know my relationships with the other actors, understand my characters background and motivations and then when I’m performing, hope all that homework will inform my performance without me having to think about it. I already have enough to think about with the millions of lines I say throughout the play. Millions.

Alceste really does love Celimene and thinks of Philinte as a dear friend. So when he’s direct and harsh it isn’t to cut but rather to love them. He rebukes them because he loves them. It seems counter intuitive but it really helps me understand my character better.

9/13

I’m feeling bad about my rant on Thursday. That’s what usually happens to me. I’ll explode and then feel remorse afterward. Not that the points I made weren’t honest and how I felt. I feel bad because I got so bothered and upset about things. I guess it just shows I’m passionate about what I do. That, and I can get offended too easily. Those two things.

Rehearsal today was much better. I’m getting to a point where I have to realize I am not Oscar worthy material. What I mean by that is that I am nowhere near where I want to be as an actor. I realize this play will not be Tony worthy acting. That is still my goal (not to get an award but just to be proud of my work and feel like I’m doing a good job). I want to do amazing work but I am not where I want to be yet. However, when I look back and see where I’m at now I see definite improvement. So I’ve come to the realization that I am happy with the strides I’ve made

and the good choices I've been able to make discoveries in my performance. I still hope to find more between now and opening and even continue to discover as the play runs. But I know I need to find some sort of contentment with being in the middle and know I'm still improving and am not where I want to be yet.

My biggest struggle is between realism and stage performance. I love being real and acting out of my feelings but that is not enough. People on the back row need to hear me and see what I'm doing. Therefore it needs to be "bigger." In the past I've had a hard time with the note: "Make it bigger." I have felt it insinuates to make it false. So to combat this I translate that note to mean, what does my character want and how badly do they want it. They want to achieve their objective in the scene and "make it bigger" means that they need to want it more and find out why. Is there more urgency? Are the stakes higher? I need to do my homework and create a reality that will inform a "bigger" performance.

Alceste is coming together! A complete arc is still elusive.

9/14

I had an audition during the day before rehearsal for a student film. While I was waiting to enter the audition I scripted my sides and wrote down my actions for each line. Because I only had like 6 or 7 one-liners it was easy to peg an action on each section of dialogue I had. Knowing my action for each line helped my performance immensely in my opinion. I felt very good about my audition. Probably the best audition I've ever done and I attribute it to knowing my action on each line. So how do I reconcile this experience to how I've felt in my theatre experience with actions for the past two years? I'm not entirely sure. One thought I have is due to not putting in the work and time needed to fully appreciate actions. Another thought is that actions play much better for film than they do theatre. Film you can stop and start and go back and play each

moment separately, and leave the blending together of everything up to the editor. Because this is how film is done I was able to have in mind my action for each line I gave. I had the luxury of reminding myself of the action before I delivered the line. In theatre one does not have this luxury. If I were to stop during a theatre performance to remember my action it would halt the play, it would put me in my head, and I would not be living in the moment. Actions in theatre are difficult for me because there is no stopping. Once the lights come up, it's go time. In *The Misanthrope* where I'm speaking throughout the entire play very long monologues this becomes a challenge. It is a phenomenal challenge to be sure. So either my actions are in me or they're not when I perform. I cannot be thinking about them.

Rehearsal today was a good one. I feel so much better after my realization the other day that my performance is not going to be breathtaking and amazing. It's not. But, I can do my best and that is all I can do. I have spent so many hours looking over the script and memorizing lines and running lines and rehearsing I cannot think I have been lazy, because I haven't. I have put in the work. Could I have put in more work? Of course, I could have sacrificed more, definitely. And maybe that's a goal of mine in the future to put even more work in. However, I am pleased with the effort and thought I have been able to put into this play. It is a step forward for me. It is improvement. And that is all I really have control over, is to improve. I cannot be Benedict Cumberbatch tomorrow. Or Ian McKellen tomorrow. I can learn from them but I can be the best David Brown I can be today. Which may not be much but it is an improvement from before. This gives me a sense of peace and I leave it up to whatever happens knowing I put in the effort and the work.

The cast is getting more familiar with one another and friendlier. This I hope will allow the comedy aspect of the play to shine more than it has. It also makes me nervous and puts

pressure on me as the lead to be social. I deal with social anxiety. I know this doesn't have to do directly with my performance but it is an aspect of the play and being an actor, having a rapport with the other actors.

As far as rehearsal goes. Tonight I identified 4 scenes I am going to review tomorrow. Solidify my actions, my relationships, and my goals for the scenes. I am going to review lines and get those down better as well. Hopefully if I keep filling in holes and administering some healing to some broken scenes it will improve the play that much more.

9/15

I took the day off today from other responsibilities and I felt like the rest greatly helped my performance tonight. I felt comfortable and connected. There was a moment where Meghan and I broke down laughing which I think was a product of me enjoying myself and being comfortable on stage. I'm glad that happened at dress rehearsal and not during an actual show.

I spent time before the dress rehearsal to go over scenes I've been having trouble with or I feel are not quite where I'd like them to be. This helped me clarify what I was doing in the scenes and again, to feel more comfortable.

There was a discovery tonight which I'm very grateful for. It is the moment where I'm using my critique of a fake person's poem as a way to tell Oronte his poem is bad. I find that scene to be very well written and very funny but I have never felt like my performance did it justice. Tonight I found a moment that made it work though. If I focus on the fake person and get caught up in the reality of what I've said to them then when Oronte interrupts me it pulls me out of my diatribe. Then the line "that's what I tried to impress upon him" is a moment when I suddenly realize by looking back at Oronte and seeing on his face that I'd gone too far. This was better to give that moment it's due and it also allows the next section of dialogue I have to have



more weight as well. Because I follow that up with just being blunt about his sonnet and throwing away the fake person. My ruse is up.

Two things I've learned help me in acting. One, to say the lines how David Brown would say them. How would I say them? This helps me connect and understand what I'm saying. The other is to study the other characters lines and identify what they say that causes me to respond the way I do. This helps me stay connected with my scene partner and listen intently and respond appropriately.

9/16

Last dress rehearsal. Solid dress I think. Everyone was on their game. They were content and did what needed to be done. Show goes up tomorrow!

9/17

Opening night. I was surprised at how an audience affected me. I wasn't expecting to be affected by an audience but rather just perform, business as usual. This was probably due to the house lights not going down for the first 10 minutes of the play. It was very eerie seeing everyone's eyes in the audience and their reactions. Super weird. The audience was great. Uproarious laughter. Great response. But I felt like my performance was affected and put on rather than having a lot of reality going on beneath my performance. I was concerned about not messing up and having my lines down. That was my focus. After the play we had a response from ACTF. Here are my notes from that:

- Beginning needs to be a volley. The lines are down and blocking is set so now we can use volume and tone and inflection in our volley. Counterpoint what they say and counterpoint their counterpoint.

- Hit Philinte with the peanut. Don't miss him. If it goes out of the boundary of the stage it takes people out of the world.
- The play is about argument, not anger. Make points and counterpoints rather than play the attitude.
- Show in the beginning that we are in Celimene's house.
- Keep the energy and theatricality up high throughout the play. Maintain that.
- Look up instead of looking down. I look down too much with my angst.
- Don't pound T in "hate you."
- It takes a lot of energy. Look up!

9/18

I felt more connected in my performance. I felt connected with my scene partner and with the words I was using.

9/19

Enjoyable performance. Most things went well. Unfortunately cues were missed, lines dropped, and it was an overall more relaxed performance from everyone tonight. I felt like I dropped some of what I did well on opening night to achieve a more "real" and emotionally true performance. Weird how my performance suffered because of this. I'm learning that there needs to be a happy marriage between technique and naturalism. Last night had that.

9/24

My goal for the show tonight was to be less guarded in my performance. There was some level of success. I was freer to show what's going on inside of me. All the quirks all the foibles

rather than guarding those things. I felt I was more honest in my movements and in my performance. I can definitely take this further but I am starting to realize it is those “weaknesses” that make the performance good. The truthful human part of a performance is what is interesting. If you guard the audience against the revelation of those things it will lessen the performance. So this is my goal, to let the honesty come through, the good, the bad, and the ugly.

9/25

Matinee performance for a bunch of high schoolers. Their reactions to the play were wildly different from the other audiences. They didn’t seem to pick up on the subtleties of the play but rather responded overwhelmingly to the overt actions of what was going on. Because of this I observed in my performance and the performance of others more of a comfort in the outwardness of the acting. But a reduction in the cleverness of the play. Interesting how one panders to the audience according to what they give you in their response. I tried to fight it and push thoughts into my head like, “I will not pander to them. If it’s beyond them it’s their fault.” But I kept feeling they were the ones in control and I needed to give them what they wanted.

9/26

I had the most people come tonight to see my performance, friends and family. I felt like I started off with too little energy and was playing catchup for the rest of the play

9/27

My voice started going out during the second half of the play. I started off at the beginning with the energy that was missing in the play yesterday. I enjoyed this performance but wasn’t sure if the audience was enjoying it.

9/28

Some actor issues. Evan Eyer completely missed his scene entrance and Sarah Beth and I had to improvise several lines and blocking. It was so fun! Even though another actor should never do that, I really enjoyed it. I have so much more experience as an improviser and so it basically gave Sarah and me an opportunity to play with the lines and characters. Sarah is not afraid either which made it an enjoyable experience.

My voice was nearly gone tonight but the audience loved it and I received feedback that they thought it was a good character choice. It was almost completely gone by the end but by that point Alceste is so angry and out of sorts that the lack of voice worked. In the end when I go off stage screaming I pointed to Evan who took over the screaming for me once I was out of sight of the audience. Sickness was going around at this time and I believe that is what caused my voice to go out. I did not strain my voice in performance and felt warm before each show. In the future I will spend even more time on warming up my voice in hopes that will overcome what a potential sickness can cause.

## Class discussion.

(The director and several actors were present.)

Notes from the director:

- Hoover found it dense at the beginning.
- He chose not to do verse because he thought pros would be easier.
- He wished he had a vocal coach for this play.
- There were some adjustments of cast replacements from spring to fall.
- He was really pleased with the final product.
  - Young actors rose to the challenge and they came a long way
  - The production grew from first show to the last show. The show got better. It grew in a good way.
- He purposefully chose a period, 1960's, where people would have things in their hands. I.e. cigarette, drinks, nuts.
- He felt like the concept worked.
- Rehearsal
  - There was a moment during rehearsal when the drinks were a part of the performance. Rather than them being a distraction they added to the performance.
- Lovely cast to work with everyone was great to work with.

Notes from Class Discussion:

- Discussion about validation vs criticism
  - Is validation important?
  - Hoover confirmed indeed he did not feel that validation was needed and the fact that the actors were cast in the play was ample validation.

- The business on stage made the long monologues interesting.
- I was able to get my lines down and give clarity to the play. And the play received very positive feedback and I headlined the play. Even though I was not the actor that stole the show I was at least able to carry it.
- Acting with less experience actors. I received positive feedback that I worked with actors less comfortable on stage than me but was able to accentuate their performance.
- Academically this was good because you have graduate students and undergraduate students come together with varied acting experience. The integration of the varied range of experience.
- I didn't feel I was entertaining enough but Hoover and Meghan Shea said that's not my job. The opening was long and Hoover said he could have cut it and also not all the actors were energetic or experienced enough to make the opening as exciting as it could have been. In an academic setting there are all types of actors and some actors with varied experience will be paired with one another.
- Hoover let Meghan and my scene go toward her being comedic. He admitted it didn't make the best sense for the scene. There could have been a better choice. If there was more time he would have changed it. To make it fit more with the scene. I did feel that the scene with Arsinoe was never great for me. I never fully understood what my character wanted to get out of that scene. That scene might have played into Meghan having a humorous moment rather than my character progressing in the story. I did feel that each night I gained more and more insight into my purpose and what I was getting out of the scene though. One revelation was that this scene gave my character an opportunity to show that I was genuinely in love with Celimene and would not betray that

love with another woman. That scene also helped me show that I put proof above feelings.

## Post Mortem Notes

### Statements of Meaning:

- The cast got along with one another very well.
- Everyone strived to be better throughout rehearsal and even during the runs, which helped for the cast to continue challenging each other and pushing each other to try and improve and become better.
- Words of Moliere were deep and fun to delve into.
- People enjoyed the play that came to see it.
- Archaic wording and language was performed and said in a way which came across as natural and meaningful.

### Questions:

- Alceste could have been bigger and comedic.
- Moments were disjointed and could have been connected better with the piece.
- See the play in its entirety. Is my character telling a full story or rather disjointed moments?
- The 1960's worked for the play
- The set design was great for the thrust

### Opinions:

- The floor was beautiful but took a lot of time and tedious effort to build.



## **Character Analysis**

### **Alceste's Story**

My backstory for Alceste was that he was a reclusive writer and novelist. His work was well-received and respected by the community but few people actually interacted with him face to face. His writing reflected beauty and love in relationships because that is what Alceste desired to see among mankind. He wrote how he wanted mankind to be, not how he thought they were. Because his writing was graceful people mistook the author to be someone lovely and pleasant. But clearly he was not that way at all around other people. In the play we see a rare moment where he comes out of his exile to confront his lover. This story allowed me to reconcile why people regarded Alceste so highly when at the same time Alceste was clearly a very disagreeable and unpleasant person to be around. It also helped me understand why Oronte would bother reading his sonnet to Alceste or care about his feedback.

## Alceste's Bone Structure

### 1. Physiology

- 1.1. Sex: Male.
- 1.2. Age: 35.
- 1.3. Height and weight: 6'1 and 175 lbs.
- 1.4. Color of hair, eyes, skin: Dark brown hair, hazel eyes, light complexion.
- 1.5. Posture: Good posture.
- 1.6. Appearance: Good-looking, underweight, clean, neat but carefree, bearded,
- 1.7. Defects: none
- 1.8. Heredity.

### 2. Sociology

- 2.1. Class: Upper-class.
- 2.2. Occupation: Writer and author.
- 2.3. Education: University educated. Well read.
- 2.4. Home life: Parents were divorced. Currently living at his country home alone and single.
- 2.5. Religion: Christian.
- 2.6. Race, nationality: Caucasian, French.
- 2.7. Place in community: Reclusive but well respected.
- 2.8. Political affiliations: None. Purposefully stays away.
- 2.9. Amusements, hobbies: Reading.

### 3. Psychology

- 3.1. Sex Life, moral standards: Abstinent until marriage with high moral standards.

- 3.2. Personal premise, ambition: Wants to rid mankind of falsity.
- 3.3. Frustrations, chief disappointments: The frailties of human weakness.
- 3.4. Temperament: Not easy-going, temperamental, and flustered.
- 3.5. Attitude toward life: Resigned.
- 3.6. Complexes: Social anxiety.
- 3.7. Introverted.
- 3.8. Abilities: Knows Latin and has a large vocabulary.
- 3.9. Qualities: Judgement and imagination.
- 3.10. I.Q.: Very High.

## Character Relationships

### 1. Alceste

- a. Alceste is not comfortable with himself in regard to the fact that he doesn't get along well with others but his ideology overrides this insecurity. He feels justified that he is attacking the weaknesses of mankind and attempting to rid the world of human foibles.

### 2. Celimene

- a. The Love interest of Alceste. He loves her but despises many of her characteristics. Alceste comes to the conclusion at the beginning of the play that he has no choice but to love her as "love is not ruled by reason." Alceste is torn by Celimene's playful and flirtatious nature. He likes it when it is directed toward him but gets furious when it is bestowed on other male suitors. He does not like how she makes a habit of pointing out the flaws of everyone she meets behind their backs. He doesn't have issues with pointing out flaws but believes it should be done face to face. In fact, Celimene and Alceste agree on many of their criticisms of others. The main difference is that Alceste says these things to the person directly. Celimene loves the social life and works hard to have people dote upon her. This is troubling to Alceste who is a social recluse and in fact has some social anxiety.

### 3. Philinte

- a. Alceste's best friend. He is well spoken and level headed and probably Alceste's superior, intellectually. Philinte is a lawyer who always sticks next to Alceste's side. It is interesting that Alceste clearly appreciates Philinte's friendship but is not afraid to tell him to leave him alone and not speak to him. He does this knowing Philinte will see through Alceste's exaggerated annoyance and stick with him. This is one reason at the end of the play why Alceste is so hurt. It is the only time Philinte does not immediately follow him off stage.

### 4. Acaste

- a. Alceste detests Acaste. He is a young, pompous marquis who believes he is deserving of Celimene's love. Acaste is one of Alceste's rivals for Celimene's love which Alceste dislikes but he dislikes even more that Acaste puts on a front and is false.
5. Oronte
- a. Alceste respects Oronte and knows him to be an honorable man at court. This however is challenged when Oronte presses to have his sonnet critiqued but does not receive the criticism well, in spite of him adamantly requesting it. He is also a rival to Celimene's love which Alceste is wary of but not too concerned.
6. Arsinoe
- a. Alceste pities Arsinoe. He respects her for her high moral standards but is not romantically interested in her. He tries to keep their relationship formal but struggles to fend off her advances.
7. Eliante
- a. Alceste respects Eliante similarly to how he respects Philinte. She is level headed and smart. She isn't prone to gossip which Alceste greatly respects. However, despite all of this he is not romantically interested in her because Celimene has stolen his heart and he cannot force himself to love another despite his best efforts.
8. Clitandre
- a. Alceste sees Clitandre similarly to how he sees Acaste. He has them pegged as superficial and false and cares little to get deeper into who they are. He has made his judgement on them and can't stand to be around them.
9. Basque
- a. Alceste is appreciative of him and recognizes him occasionally. However he takes little regard for Celimene's manservant because his focus is elsewhere.
10. Du Bois

- a. Alceste loves Du Bois with all his blundering antics. He is as real as real can be which is why Alceste employs him. Though his intellect is far inferior to Alceste's, it isn't his brains that Alceste respects but his honesty.

#### 11. Guard

- a. Alceste has little regard for the guard until he shows him the warrant for his arrest. The guard represents the aristocracy that Alceste despises.

## **Acting Process and Additional Research**

My acting process consisted of three main things. First, understand practically what I needed to do as an actor. For this I leaned heavily on the book A Practical Handbook for the Actor. Second, I strived to model this experience after the life of Constantin Stanislavsky: his journey through acting, where he started, and where he ended up. I wanted to make this play a mini-experience of the life of Stanislavsky as much as I could and use his system as a guide. Third, I took a conglomeration of acting processes from anyone and anywhere I could find that might contribute to my performance. These came from improvisation techniques, research I garnered during my comprehensive examination in my master's program, a study of other successful and accomplished actors, and other sources.

## Practical Acting

The Practical Handbook for an Actor is an acting handbook used in our master's program at the University of New Orleans. As is clear in the title, it provides a practical approach to acting. The overall objective of The Practical Handbook for an Actor is to provide a means whereby the actor can live truthfully under the imaginary circumstances of the play. There were times when I felt my performance was false rather than truthful. There are two main things an actor must do to achieve truthfulness. First is to have an action, which is how one physically obtains a goal. The second is to understand the moment, or what is actually happening in the scene. There were moments when I struggled with actions. I felt they got me thinking more, rather than allowing me to be free in the moment. However, I got to the point when my actions were internalized and I didn't have to think about them, which helped me to realize how beneficial actions can be. Understanding the moment was something I felt like I understood. I did a good job of researching the text and understanding what was happening in all the scenes. I felt comfortable that I knew what was actually going on in every scene of the play.

The book provides several techniques for the actor to utilize in order to find a way to live truthfully under the imaginary circumstances of the play. The first technique is to have a physical action. It describes 9 criteria that a proper action must have. An action must:

1. Be physically capable of doing.
2. Be fun to do.
3. Be specific.
4. Find the test in the other.
5. Not be an errand.
6. Not presuppose a physical or emotional state.



7. Not be manipulative.
8. Have a “cap.”
9. Honor playwright's intentions.

Of these criteria the ones I tried to focus on the most were to have it be enjoyable and find the test in the other. These two kept me interested in the performance and allowed me to work off of my scene partner. There were times during *The Misanthrope* that I realized I wasn't doing anything to my partner or trying to get anything out of them. Once I realized this and focused on having an action, testing whether it was working with my scene partner, I was then much more involved in the scene and what was happening on stage.

The second technique analyzes the scene. I used this technique from start to finish. There are three main questions an actor must ask himself:

1. What is the character literally doing?
2. What is the essential action of the character in the scene?
3. What is that action like to me? (“As if”)

If I ever found myself confused in a scene I would go back to the first question. What is my character doing? I wrote this down several times in my script when I felt lost. Once I realized what I was doing I would then ask myself why. Why is my character doing this? Which to me was another way of saying, “what am I trying to get out of this scene” or to put it another way, “what is my action.” If at this point I still felt stuck or wasn't fully connected with my scene I would then use an “as if” to better connect with the material. These questions naturally made me think, which in turn put me in my analytical mind. So, once I felt good about my answers to these question I had to remind myself the following points or mantras:

“That which hinders your task is your task.”

“You must act before you think.”

“Impulses are correct.”

This would free me from my mind which I naturally am in too often for my own good. I would act on impulse which wasn't always a great choice or the best thing for the scene but it was always truthful. And upon that truth I could build more to what was needed in the scene.

The next technique deals with externals, or in other words, bodily adjustments, ornaments, and physical states. Bodily adjustments were a major focus for me. I had to learn not to shuffle on stage but to move purposefully. This took a lot of concentrated effort as I naturally shuffled my feet and wander onstage. To combat this I used bodily adjustments which at first felt very unnatural and goofy looking. However, the more I did it the more I felt comfortable and confident in my movement. My movement improved so much by focusing on this, however I realized from this experience there is a lot more freedom and practice I can do to perfect my craft in this regard. Another bodily adjustment I had to focus on was whenever I sat. I needed to have a natural presence but at the same time keep good posture so I wasn't slouching. So I had to figure out a way to be comfortable in the scene and not be stiff but at the same time to keep good posture whenever I sat down.

My concern with ornaments happened mainly before the show. I wore one costume throughout the show. I applied mascara to my facial hair so that the audience could see it as my hair is naturally light and thin. My jacket provided interesting opportunities to button and unbutton it which I had fun to playing with different ways of doing that and finding purpose in it. As far as any physical states, I was never drunk like some of the other characters but my character did get fiercely angry. There was a scene where Alceste was so enraged he began to physicalize that rage.

Preparing for a scene is another technique I used to prepare for this role. A lot of this technique happened during the rehearsal process and even what I've worked on personally as an actor before I was cast in this play. It talks about learning lines by rote, not to memorize inflections or line reading, and having the lines down so well that they will never be a hindrance onstage. It took me a very long time to memorize my lines. I had a lot of lines and I'm not naturally good at memorizing. Mnemonic devices such as putting a song to the lines or memorizing the lines a certain way might help me memorize but would be detrimental to my performance as it would inform a specific line delivery. It talks about using the rehearsal process to explore and free your character so when you're onstage you have a comfortability with that freedom. I felt like the rehearsal process was so rushed I started to find this freedom more fully only when we were actually performing in front of an audience. If there was one thing I could wish for was for more time in rehearsal.

The last technique I utilized from this book was reviewing and performing a self-analysis on the tools of the craft I needed to work on. The tools mentioned in the book are as follows:

1. A strong clear voice
2. Good clear speech
3. A strong supple body
4. The ability to analyze a scene correctly
5. Semantics – the ability to use words specifically in order to choose a good action
6. Memorization by rote
7. The ability to work off the other person
8. The ability to act before you think (i.e. on your impulses)
9. The ability to concentrate. Concentration is like a muscle. It can only be tempted

by a good action to get back to the task at hand.

10. Bravery

11. Will

12. Common sense

Of these tools the two that I felt were the most beneficial for me and ones which I can continue to improve upon are bravery and common sense. Common sense helped me to know when to voice my opinion and when I should keep quiet. This helped me get along with my cast mates and director and keep a cool calm head about things. Bravery helped me become something more than I was. It helped me to not be afraid to fail, fall on my face, be made fun of, or do something others might consider to be stupid. And through all of this I was able to find things that surprisingly worked and were better than what I had originally planned or what I would have done if I played it safe.

The last part of practical acting I used in my acting process was to review the pitfalls of acting in the real world. They are three fold:

1. The Emotional Trap

a. Never worry about having to create emotion

2. Myth of Character

a. It's impossible for you to become the character you are playing.

3. Keep the theatre Clean

a. Work well with others. Actors, director, etc.

All of these were great reminders and comforting things to think about as I pursued to live truthfully in this role. I knew I didn't need to worry about creating a certain emotion or that I was required to become the character of Alceste. As for keeping the theatre clean, casting helped

immensely here. Each member of the cast was friendly with each another which made the experience so enjoyable. It

## Stanislavski

Since I've been in graduate school I've been very interested in the life and teachings of Constantin Stanislavski. Reading and researching more about him I've gained several gems of knowledge that I used in my own development as an actor and in my performance in *The Misanthrope*. Additionally, my performance of Alceste is heavily influenced by Stanislavski's acting revolution. I am unable to know exactly how Moliere performed Alceste when he first appeared onstage in the 1600's. Even if I did know exactly how it was done back then I would not recreate it. Our world has changed. Acting standards have changed, mainly because of one man, Constantin Stanislavski. So it is impossible to talk about a modern acting performance without giving credit to the man who changed the actors approach to acting.

Nearly all current acting methods and teaching can be traced back to Stanislavski's teachings. He was influential during his lifetime not only for acting but for all aspects of theatre, from production, to rehearsal, to upending outdated theatre mores of the time. His influence was felt during his lifetime and the waves he made are still felt today. Stanislavski put together a system for acting that taught the actor how to have an understanding of the most intangible and uncontrollable aspects of human behavior, such as emotions and inspiration. He sought to create a rational approach for an acting technique that produced real emotions, feelings, and movement. In his own words he said of his system that "its aim was to give practical and conscious methods for the awakening of superconscious creativeness" (*My Life in Art* 531). The life of Stanislavski and his teachings helped me in my acting and in my performance of Alceste. I modeled my experience after many experiences Stanislavsky had throughout his life, from early childhood and on into adulthood. I have included much of my research on his acting methods and his life in

general. I explore his life and experiences and extrapolate how his life experiences helped me to improve as an actor and helped me explore further the character of Alceste.

Constantin Stanislavski was born in Moscow, Russia in 1863 about 200 years after Moliere's death. This was during a period where Russia had undergone a great resurgence of the theatre arts. During Moliere's time, in the late 1600's, there were virtually no native theatres or actors in Russia. It wasn't until 1724 under the rule of Peter I "The Great" where a theatre was built in St. Petersburg and regular performances began (Edwards 6). After Peter I, Elizabeth and then Peter III made further advances in theatre. "Finally, in 1779, the first permanent dramatic school was founded in St. Petersburg to attract a regular succession of actors drawn from the Russian people" (Edwards 7). In the early 1800's several influential theatres opened in Moscow: The Bolshoi Theatre in 1824, the Maly Theatre in 1825, and the Alexander Theatre in St. Petersburg in 1831. The court heavily influenced the resurgence of theatre but there was another movement separated from the nobility that was also on the rise. Serf theatres began to pop up where peasants, who had a natural stage presence and entertainment quality, began performing on these government sanctioned stages. Russia began revitalizing many well-known plays including many of the works of Moliere. This caused a mini-resurgence of Moliere's work in the country of Russia. A contemporary of the time described the theatre by saying, "Our young theatre gradually grew from an object of nobleman's entertainment into a theatre for the people and for their creative expression. Many talents developed to full artistry despite the adverse conditions which were prevalent in the serf theatres" (Edwards 10). Since many of Moliere's works were a satire on nobility and high society they became popular amongst these theatre groups. In the early 1800's there were virtually no Russian plays which gained any sort of

acclaim due to Tsar Nicholas demanding that all writing have a “patriotic repertoire,” and that nothing should inspire independent thinking (Edwards 13).

Despite the tight control the monarchy held over the theatre, there were many quality actors who gained admiration and favor from their audiences. One of the greatest actors of the time lived in St. Petersburg and his name was Vassily Karatygin. He and famous art critic of the time, Denis Diderot, agreed with the acting theory that there should be no feeling in the actor’s performance. Karatygin’s “interpretations were always planned in advance down to the smallest detail: he was skilled in the craftsmanship of his profession” (Edwards 14). In Moscow another actor named Paul Mochalov was equally as acclaimed as Karatygin but his acting was completely different from Karatygin. Mochalov did not plan for his roles but rather left his performances up to the inspiration of the moment. This often led to inconsistent performances from night to night. His characters would shift even during a single performance. However, it would only take one great moment during the night for people to call him a genius. Mochalov wrote:

In the first place, the actor must proceed with the analysis of the author’s thinking and intentions, that is, with the discovery of what he meant to express by such and such words, and what his aim was... depth of soul and a lively imagination are the two faculties constituting the basis of talent, however, only then does the actor possess the gift to convey to the audience what he feels in his soul, that is, to make his imagination picture vividly the action, whether described or taking place -- in brief, only then can the actor make the spectator forget himself. (Edwards 14)

Despite the vast difference between the acting styles of Karatygin and Mochalov there was a third actor who challenged both these methods and ended up becoming one of the most



well-known actors of his day, Mikhail Semyonovich Shchepkin, who himself was born a serf. Shchepkin showed talent from a young age being praised above his peers as a child. It wasn't until Shchepkin turned 17 years old and joined the private theatre of Count Volkenstein where he met Prince Metcherski that Shchepkin found his niche. "Prince Metcherski, an amateur actor of unusual and original talent, had a very important effect upon him" (Edwards 15). Prince Metcherski acted with minimal gestures and his voice tone was ordinary. The simplicity of Metcherski's acting at first seemed to Shchepkin as unfitting for an actor. The popular style of acting during this time was not realistic. It involved big movements and an affected voice. "In discovering the natural tone of voice, he was on the threshold of a new way of acting, and it may be said that the realistic school, which was to come to full flower some years later in the Moscow Art Theatre, was born with Shchepkin" (Edwards 16). Shchepkin was an early purveyor of what Stanislavski eventually articulated to be his acting system.

Free theatres started popping up on the outskirts of cities and away from the noble elite. In 1881 the Pushkin theatre opened with several advances in the way theatres were run. The actors lived together and the emphasis was on the ensemble rather than individual performances. Celebrity and the popularity of stars was not encouraged. These theatres paved the way for the eventual founding of Stanislavski's Moscow Art Theatre many years later which would perform some of Moliere's plays.

Stanislavski began to create studios in February of 1909 where he taught his system of acting to other actors. He wanted to spread his knowledge of how an actor can find the inner inspiration to become the character. At first it was not received with much interest and his first group of students were young actors who were unknown at the time. Eventually his classes became a hub for developing actors.

Stanislavski spent a lifetime creating his system for acting. Beginning at a young age until his death at the age of 75 years old he continued to examine and re-examine the art of acting. His ultimate goal was to find reality in acting and create a system for accessing the inspiration and spiritual connection required for such a performance. There were many elements to his system and his books illustrate much of Stanislavski's beliefs on acting. Several key aspects of Stanislavski's acting system influenced how I approached the character of Alceste.

One thing that led Stanislavski to create his system was his intense drive to never settle for anything less than perfection. He was constantly looking how he could improve his acting and was never one to spare himself honest criticism. This is evident from his early years.

Finally, it was immediately after his performance in the two farces *A cup of Tea* and *The Old Mathematician* that he made the first critical comments on his acting, thereby beginning his "Artistic Notes." Regarding his acting in the play, *The Old Mathematician*, he wrote, "I played coldly and languidly, without a spark of talent, though I was not worse than the others." With reference to his successes in the first play, as measured by the audience's laughter he commented: "It was Muzil (a comedian admired by Stanislavsky) who made their laughter, for I had copied even his voice." Magarshack maintains that "it was this habit of unsparing self-criticism which gradually led him to examine analytically the laws of acting and eventually to evolve his famous 'system.'" (Edwards 29)

Stanislavski's self-criticism and awareness was the beginning of creating a system for actors. Because he was able to self-reflect and intellectually analyze his acting he began to understand acting on a deeper level. I found myself being honest in evaluating my performance with Alceste and other times I would try and rationalize myself. I knew when I was not understanding the

characters motivations or why he acted the way he did in a particular scene. In these moments I could humble myself to find the meaning in what I was doing. However there were many times when I would make a choice that didn't work and I found myself trying to justify my choice rather than realizing that there was probably a better choice out there.

Stanislavski continued to work on his system but there were some inconsistencies in his work. Edwards points out two conflicting methods, "which he designated as 'to memorize the text so that the words repeated themselves mechanically,' and 'to live not in our own selves but in our roles as we did in *The Practical Man*'" (32). Stanislavski comments on this contradiction by saying, "Of course this did not lead us anywhere, for the methods of experience in life continually created a need for impromptu work and the methods of memorizing words completely excluded the possibility of impromptus" (Edwards 32). But even though Stanislavski felt that this did not lead anywhere, it did lead to further analysis and exploration in developing his system. Actors start off most roles by memorizing the lines. I struggled in my efforts to memorize the long passages of dialogue in *The Misanthrope*. I found myself stuck in regurgitating the lines rather than allowing the impromptu possibilities that Stanislavski refers to. I learned that once I have my lines completely down and I didn't have to fear the lines would be there when I needed them, I was freer to be present in the moment and react to any new stimuli that the play might offer.

Physicality was an important aspect of Stanislavski's system. In his book *My Life in Art* Stanislavski recalls the connection he made with acting and physical actions.

I tried first of all to understand and study the physiological cause of the physical process, that is, why the rhythm of action and speech is so slow with old men, why they rise so carefully, why they straighten so slowly, walk so slowly, etc...

Before I would rise I looked for something to rest my hands on, and rose with the help of my hands.... Conscious relation to action that was typical to old age guided me and as a result I turned my own feelings to the physiological phenomena of senility. This created a kind of method from the outer to the inner, from the body to the soul, based upon an unbreakable bond between physical and psychical nature. (182)

Acting in *The Misanthrope* helped me be free to move on stage better than any other experience I've had as an actor so far. I learned that I did not know how to move purposefully before this experience. I didn't even know what to move around purposefully meant. My lower body was fearful, whereas I had trained my upper body to be free. I realized if I wanted to move around the stage in purposeful manner I had to consciously tell myself how exactly my legs would move. At first this was very mechanical. But the more I did this the more comfortable it became and it became more natural for my character to interact with the other characters onstage.

One of the most contested and debated aspects of Stanislavski's system has to do with emotion. Lee Strasberg strongly purported emotional recall and stated that this came from Stanislavski. However, Stella Adler and others have spoken about how damaging and incorrect this can be. Stanislavski writes in his book *My Life in Art* that unless you have some truthful inner motivation or inspiration then:

Nothing is left but to squeeze emotion out of yourself by means of force. There is no greater harm than the harm in the mechanical forcing of the emotions from outside, without the creation of an inner spiritual stimulation. Under this method emotion remains in a drowsy state and the actor begins to strain himself physically. The muscles of the actor are willing tools that are worse than the worst

enemies. Every young actor who forces his will to undertake parts too difficult for him only develops his stage muscles, and nothing else. (195)

Stanislavski's main goal with creating his system was to be able to have a road map for actors to organically live the role they were playing rather than just simply perform the mannerisms of such.

In the repertoire of an actor, among the large number of parts played by him, there are some that seem to have been creating themselves in his inner consciousness for a long time. One only has to touch the role and it comes to life without any of the tortures of creation, without any quest or technical work. (*My Life in Art* 213)

Stanislavski wanted to actually become the character. "Within the limits of the play," he explains, "I live the life of Rostanov, I think his thoughts, I cease to be myself. I become another man, a man like Rostanov. Do you understand this phrase that is magic for the actor, To become another?" Gogol explained this phenomenon, "Anybody can imitate an image, but only a true talent can become an image." Stanislavski continues:

If that was true, then I had talent, for in this role (although it was almost the only one) I had become Rostanov, while in my other roles I merely copied and imitated the necessary images and sometimes my own image. (*My Life in Art* 214)

Work was always a part of Stanislavski's life, from working at his father's factory to spending hours on his plays. This work-ethic translated itself into his system. Stanislavski did not hide his strong feelings about the necessity of hard work. He said this:

Remember that my objective is to teach you the hard work of an actor and director of plays - it is not to provide you with a pleasant pastime on the stage.

There are other theatres, teachers and methods for that. The work of an actor and

director, as we understand it here, is a painful process, not merely some abstract “joy of creativeness” that one hears so much empty talk about from the ignoramuses in art. Our work gives us joy when we undertake it. This is the joy of being conscious that we may, that we have the right, that we have been permitted to engage in the work we love - work to which we have dedicated our lives. and our work gives us joy when we see that having fulfilled our task, put on a performance, played a role, we have contributed something worthwhile to our audience, communicated to it something necessary, important to its life, for its development...

Nevertheless the whole process of an actor’s and director’s work - including his performance - is one that requires enormous self-mastery and often also great physical endurance. This work cannot be replaced by means of general words and moods.

The thing which lies at the base of an actor’s or director’s creativeness is work, and not moods or any other popular slogans such as “flights,” “down beats,” “triumphs.” (*Stanislavski’s Legacy* 9)

Failure and hard work is an important part of the process. You cannot have the good without the failures and hard work. These two things are inescapable from each other for an able actor. Stanislavski was able to overcome failures and considers them important for his own personal development but also for those who use his system to gain truthfulness in their acting.

When I look back over the roads that I have traveled during my long life in art, I want to compare myself to a gold-seeker who must first make his way through almost impassable jungles in order to find a place where he may discover a streak

of gold, and later wash hundreds of tons of sand and stones in order to find at last several grains of the noble metal. And, like the gold-seeker, I cannot will to my heirs my labors, my quests, my losses, my joys and my disappointments, but only the few grains of gold that it has taken me all my life to find. (Edwards 1)

Lee Strasburg of The Group Theatre was very influential in bringing Stanislavski's system of acting to America. He took the teachings of Stanislavski and used them in his famous theatre. The Group Theatre's members became some of the most influential actors, acting coaches, theatre directors, and film-makers in American history. Members included Stella Adler, Elia Kazan, Sanford Meisner, and more. Members of the group went on to create stars such as Marlon Brando, James Dean, Al Pacino, and others. Theatre and films such as *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *On the Waterfront* were directed by Elia Kazan. These groundbreaking names and performances were all influenced by Stanislavski primarily through The Group Theatre. Strasburg taught heavily from the influence of Stanislavski. He sought reality in the performances from the group. He used a version of Stanislavski's system which he called "The Method." Strasberg coined the phrase "method" as Stanislavski never used the word to describe his system for acting, but always called what he was creating his system. Thus the term "Method Acting" came from Strasberg as a bastardization of the term Stanislavski used. Strasberg also strongly supported the idea of emotional memory which idea Stanislavski abandoned in his later years.

One of the most highly influential acting coaches of the 20th century, Stella Adler, was able to meet Stanislavski a few years before his death. Her meeting with him happened after she was introduced to his methods via The Group Theatre. These teachings of Stanislavski that she learned through the theatre however were heavily influenced by Strasberg and did not reflect

exactly what Stanislavski believed or taught. Strasberg's method was a highly interpreted and influenced version of Stanislavski's system. Adler first met Stanislavski in a small group of about 6 people in Europe. At first she was hesitant to speak with him. She recalls:

Mr. Stanislavski spoke to everyone and he perceived that I was reticent.

Naturally, he would notice that, because he had the "eye" and nothing got past him. He finally turned to me and said, "Young lady, everybody has spoken to me but you." That was the moment that I looked at him, eye to eye, we were together. I heard myself saying, "Mr. Stanislavski, I loved the theatre until you came along, and now I hate it!" He looked at me a little longer, and then he said, "well, then you must come to see me tomorrow." (Adler 119)

Stella Adler then was able to solicit his assistance for a period of a couple weeks. She worked with him, questioned him, and prodded into his system of acting.

Stanislavski and I were in the greatest closeness of director and actress, and very soon it was just actor and actress! We worked together every day for many, many weeks. In those periods, there were certain things that he asked me to do.

Particularly, he made very clear to me that an actor must have an enormous imagination that is free and not inhibited by self-consciousness. I understood that he was very much an actor who was fed by the imagination. He explained to me how important it was to use the imagination on the stage. He then explained in detail how important it was to use the circumstances. He said that where you are is what you are, and how you are, and what you can be. You are in a place that will feed you, that will give you strength that will give you the ability to do whatever you want. (Adler 120)



The meeting between them was brief but important. It allowed Adler to have a counterpoint to Strasberg's interpretation of Stanislavski's system. She expresses her tribute to Stanislavski this way:

When I did walk away from Stanislavski's apartment, I wandered the streets of Paris. I knew Paris; I knew it as any fervent actress would, who looks at the roofs, at every doorknob, at every little shop. I was infatuated with Paris. I had worked with the master teacher of the world, the man whose words were going to flood the world with truth. That sense he had, of how truthful you had to be; this was his heritage, this is what he gave away. I could never thank him enough. I remember walking down the street and saying, "Mr. Stanislavski, I can't thank you personally, but all my life I will dedicate myself to other people, to give them what you have given me." (Adler 122).

From famous acting coaches, to directors, to actors Stanislavsky has had a major influence on the world of acting and theatre. His Legacy has been felt for over a hundred years and continues to influence actors today. Stanislavsky gives us an idea of what he wanted his legacy or influence on the world of theatre to be like in the speech he gave for the first rehearsal of The Moscow Art Theatre.

For me this theatre is a long-hoped-for, long-promised child. It is not for the sake of material gain that we have waited so long for it. No, it is the answer to our prayer for something to bring light and beauty into our humdrum lives. Let us be careful to appreciate what has fallen into our hands lest we shall soon be crying like the child who has broken his favorite toy. If we do not come to this enterprise with clean hands we shall defile it, disgrace ourselves and be scattered to the ends

of Russia: some will go back to prosaic duties of everyday life, others, for the sake of keeping the wolf from the door, will profane their art in dirty, ramshackle theatres. Do not forget that if we break up with such a black mark against us we shall deserve to be laughed to scorn, because there we have undertaken something which is not a simple, private matter, but bears a public character. (*Stanislavski's Legacy 3*)

Stanislavski was an accomplished actor himself but his greatest contribution was what he left for others to inspire and lift them. He dedicated his life to the idea of finding reality in acting and bringing this enlightenment to others.

Do not forget either that our goal is to bring enlightenment into the lives of the poor, to give them some aesthetic enjoyment amid the gloom in which they have been living. We are attempting to create the first thoughtful, high-minded, popular theatre and to this great goal we are dedicating our lives. (*Stanislavski's Legacy 3*)

## Major points I learned from studying Stanislavsky:

Honest self-criticism is good. It is important. Don't kid yourself you're doing a good job if you're not. If you don't understand something admit it to yourself. If you can't figure out a part at first that's okay. Honesty to yourself can lead to greater discoveries and better acting ability. Lying to yourself that you should not be criticized will make you stagnant. Tiger woods said about his golf game that he is his biggest critic and what other people say doesn't bother him because he's already ten times harder on himself. Stella Adler tells a story about how Stanislavski admits he didn't understand the role of Dr. Stockman in Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*. Though his first performance was groundbreaking it took him ten years to really understand the character.

Mr. Stanislavski also told me - very much actor to actress - how he had suffered when he played *An Enemy of the People*. He said that he was a complete disaster. He didn't know the part; he didn't know where to touch it. He said it was difficult for him; that Ibsen was difficult for him. He told me that it took him ten years to find the part. While he was gathering the elements for a technique that would make acting easier, he found the answer to the problem that he had essentially experienced as an actor throughout his life, especially while working on *An Enemy of the People*. In this particular play, Stanislavski said that he had talked to the people and asked them to do something. That was wrong. He said, "I had to speak to the souls of the people. If I could reach their souls, I could get somewhere." Ten years after Stanislavski had originally played the role, the play was revived; the part was his and he was then able to play it. (Adler 121)

Ten years later when he played the part again he finally was able to figure it out. It took him ten years to understand the part! This is one of the greatest acting minds ever and it took him ten years. It's ok to admit when you don't know or don't understand something. It will springboard you to discover and greater steps of self-improvement.

Copying other actors is a great place to start. Stanislavski did this in his first performance in *The Alexiev Circle*. He completely copied a comedian's performance even down to the voice (Edwards 29). Even though it was uninspired he gained tools and abilities and honed his craft so that when he was able to further tap into inspiration he had the acting chops and ability to give the inspiration justice. So even though a complete mimicry or copy of another performance will lack the inspiration that a full performance might have, it will improve the actor's mechanics and abilities. It will increase the range of the actor. There was a lot of this in my performance of *Alceste*. I copied movements and physical actions that were not inspired but I wanted to at least get myself moving and doing something.

If you give a performance that you love, or in other words feel inspired, then don't expect others to praise you. They may very well criticize you. It happened often to Stanislavski in his early career and it prompted him to find a way to reconcile personal inspiration with audience approval. I am nervous to let myself show and I hold myself back at least partially for fear of criticism. This is something I really tried hard not to do but to let myself be free. But being free I should not expect that my inspiration will garner acclaim. There was very little acclaim on my performance as *Alceste*. The play garnered a lot of praise but my performance specifically did not. It is a struggle for me to reconcile this. I naturally seek praise and acclaim and it is difficult for me to convince myself it is not necessary or needed for my wellbeing as an actor.

Stanislavski managed this however and his inner drive to pursue his passion for acting overrode any criticism he might have received.

Reality in acting does not mean boring commonplace reality. On the contrary, there is an artistic reality that is both real and interesting. Stanislavski said, “I wanted living, truthful, real life, not commonplace life, but artistic life” (*My Life in Art* 97). He understood that complete realism can be boring but truth on stage in a performance can be awe-inspiring. I found moments of real truthful reality while performing in *The Misanthrope*. There were times when it was a struggle for me to feel inspired but still be entertaining and heighten the scene. This is something I have yet to master and will continue to revisit this until I have.

Stanislavski frequently refers to the spirit, saying such things as finding “spiritual truth.” He stated that the spirit should respond to the role rather than an outward expression of the character. I can relate to this. My own journey to acting has been one where something inside me is drawn to acting, possibly my spirit. I feel something about acting that inspires me. Stanislavski sought inspiration in every role he played. He felt that characters should not be hollow but that they should have some spiritual response to the truth of the character. I felt spiritually connected to the character of Alceste. He stood for something in the face of social pressure. His morals were firm and he was not willing to waver. I don’t agree with how he went about pushing his ideals on others but the fact that he had enough moral courage to stand for what he believed to be right was something I felt inspired to commit to in my performance.

Stanislavski never gave up. Before even the first play, the Moscow Art Theatre received a barrage of criticism and mocking from the theatre community. After their first play was a success it was followed by five failures in a row. It wasn’t until after all this failure that they produced one of the greatest performances in modern history *The Seagull*. This is a great lesson for anyone

to learn. That failures do not define you or stop you from incredible success. Stanislavski's vision and sincere belief in an ideal kept him moving forward and despite great failures and criticism he realized his vision. Even if you fail that does not mean you are a failure. It does not mean that you cannot achieve greatness. Failures do not define us. Stanislavski was the epitome of this principle as his successes and discoveries have influenced nations for over one hundred years. I can connect with this idea of failure in my portrayal of Alceste. I do not feel like my performance was as impactful as it could have been. However, I can take things from this experience to drive me forward to find the success I'm looking for. I was a lead in a play that was very successful. Almost unanimously enjoyed by the audience. I wasn't just the lead but was practically in every scene with incredibly long lines of dialogue. I was in the play twice as much as anyone else. Maybe more than all the other characters combined. So the fact that the play was well received shows that even though my personal performance may not have been stellar, I was able to keep the play going well enough for people to enjoy it.

Constantin Stanislavski has had the greatest impact on modern acting, more than any other figure in history. Almost all current acting methods and teaching can be traced back to his significance. He was influential during his lifetime not only for acting but for all aspects of theatre, from production, to rehearsal, to upending outdated theatre mores of the time. His influence was felt during his lifetime and the waves he made are still felt today. Stanislavski put together a system for acting that taught the actor how to have an understanding of their performance in the most intangible and uncontrollable aspects of human behavior, such as emotions and inspiration. He sought out to create a rational approach for an acting technique that produced real emotions, feelings, and movement. His work has influenced the way I act and pursue a role as an actor. It influenced and shaped my performance as Alceste.

## Improvisation Techniques

I used several improvisation techniques in my performance. The most basic improvisational technique is something called “Yes, and...” It basically means to accept whatever your scene partner is offering and then add upon that. I used this, especially in scenes with Sarah Beth and Meghan Shea. They both were very free and open in their performances where I could try something and they would be willing to reciprocate. This influenced the performances and allowed them to have a life of their own. I believe this style enhances the chance for truth in the moment to be established.

Another tenant of improvisation was commitment. If I failed or made a bad choice, I didn’t show the audience what I thought of my acting but rather committed to my choice and moved forward. This is a great technique for making the best of the moment and surprisingly a lot of good performances arose from this. I felt several times that my performance wasn’t as interesting as it could be but I was committed to it and started to feel better about my performance.

The last improvisational technique is to set up your partner. I tried to do this in a scene with Sarah Beth. There is a part in the play where Alceste basically tells Celimine to stop yelling at him and I chose to deliver that line by yelling at her. This allowed her to respond in kind and it was a fun moment for our characters and the audience.

## The Courage to Create

I utilized the teachings in this book. I studied this book for my comprehensive exam last year and found many things therein beneficial to my acting. Rollo May says that "a chief characteristic of courage is that it requires a centeredness within our own being... we must always base our commitment in the center of our own being, or else no commitment will be ultimately authentic." I strived for this in my performance. I strived to be centered in what was truthful to me. He defines courage as four basic ideas: physical, moral, social and creative.

Physical Courage was difficult for me at the beginning of rehearsal. I shuffled my feet across the stage rather than moving purposefully. This was something I had to consciously work on even into the run of the play. I was able to begin to understand how to better move purposefully and with real intent. Moral courage played a big part in creating my character. Alceste stood up for what he believed to be right in the face of ridicule. He did it unabashedly and was not ashamed to tear down hypocrisy.

Social Courage was a part of my performance. I struggle socially as a person and I had to make an effort to be friendly with my fellow actors. I had to force myself to relate with them and get out of my shell. I am naturally more comfortable by myself but I knew that the show would be better if I opened up to the other actors and the atmosphere was a friendly one. Creative Courage was difficult for me because I try to shield myself from criticism and mistakes. Being creative means people will disagree with you and it also means you'll have to try new things and make mistakes. It is hard for me to put my heart and soul out there and have someone return it with sticky notes on it saying how wrong it is. But I pushed myself to create and then be humble to receive criticism. I wasn't always able to receive criticism humbly or to admit my choices weren't always strong but there were moments where I was honestly introspective and the result



made my performance much richer as a result.

Rollo May talks about the nature of creativity. He says that creativity is a stepchild of psychology. I am someone who is very into psychology. I minored in it in my undergraduate years. I am constantly thinking and am in my head. I believe this can be used for good if it doesn't adversely affect my performance and prevent me from being free in the moment. He asserts that creativity is bringing in something new into being and is more than just being artful or aesthetically pleasing. I tried to bring something new to the table. And I came to realize the only thing new I can bring is myself. I am unique and whatever I add to the performance that comes from me will be unique as well. Every human is unique.

The creative process is unique to every artist. May says that it is more about creative moments than creative people and that the encounter with a creative moment can vary in intensity. However, inspiration comes and isn't something we can will. We can only create an environment that is more susceptible to this inspiration. I think of inspiration in spiritual terms. These are ideas and thoughts that come from outside of you. I have researched and studied many words from successful actors and directors. Steven Spielberg explained inspiration as something where you get hit from behind. You don't choose it, it chooses you. Daniel Day Lewis, said that he just hopes it comes and that it isn't created by him. I put in the time and did my best to create an environment where I could be inspired. There were moments of inspiration that I was able to take and use in my performance. I did my best to find moments in *The Misanthrope* but my best choices came from inspiration.

May talks about limits and creativity and their relationship. He teaches that the limitations put upon creativity are not only unavoidable but valuable. I agree with this assertion. Because of this limitations in *The Misanthrope* I strived to find a balance between realism and

comedy. May also asserts that consciousness is born out of these limits and that creativity arises out of the tension between spontaneity and limitations. I wanted to be spontaneous but still be true to the blocking and the script. These are confining aspects but it caused me to find solutions and to be free in the moment while still being true to the limits.

## Empty Space

This was another book I studied for my comprehensive exam. It is written by Peter Brook and breaks up theatre into 4 separate ideals. It was helpful to view theatre in four different perspectives and I utilized several of these teachings in my preparation in *The Misanthrope*.

The first aspect is called the “deadly theatre.” It talks about how no one alive today has ever seen how Shakespeare put up his plays. No one has heard how they spoke or has seen how they moved. Since Moliere’s plays are centuries old as well, I applied this teaching. My performance does not need to mimic how Moliere played the character of Alceste. Indeed it is impossible for me to see exactly how he did it. So I am free to perform how I feel inspired to do it. Also, the setting of a more modern period helped influence my performance as well. Another thing it mentions is the director is not God. This is good for me to keep in mind because I naturally want to please the director and do everything director asks of me. It also talks about how theatre can be alive if it has a goal. My goal is to improve other people's lives. I can do this with an inspiring performance that helps people think and be inspired to greater heights in their lives. I received feedback from audience members after the show that it made them think and make certain realizations about their own lives. This feedback was incredibly gratifying as I realized I was a part of making a change in people’s lives.

Peter Brook talks about the “holy theatre” as a place for an escape from reality. A place where people can come and enjoy themselves and be happy. I was pleased that *The Misanthrope* was very well received and people were pleased with their time spent in the theatre. In the “holy theatre” there is a concern regarding applause versus silence. Silence is not only inevitable but necessary. The times when our audience responded was more powerful because it was preceded by silence. I knew they were in to the play and listening. Brook lists what every actor needs:

concentration, courage, will, clear thought, emotional reserves, and form. Each of these aspects I tried to better understand and incorporate into my performance. The last part of “holy theatre” that I connected with was his urge for actors to allow barriers to drop. The secret of the role is for the actor to open himself up. It is a gift to the spectator. I realized that putting things on doesn't find more out but rather stripping and tearing away allowed me to find the truthfulness of the situation. I had to have a rehearsal where I stripped away all the added theatricality and just perform truthfully. Once I had that base I could add on everything else.

The two biggest lessons I was able to take from the “rough theatre” and incorporate into my performance were that actors need lives outside of the theatre and that batteries need to be recharged before each show. I have a lot of things in my life beyond my performance: I have a wife and four children, I have classes and school work, I have an assistantship which is basically a part-time job working in the costume shop, and I spend many hours each week serving in my church calling. All these things take up my time, energy, and thought. But they also give me life experience I can put into my performance. I had to recharge my batteries before each performance. I was absent from a class because I needed time to recharge. I was concerned when a Friday matinee was put upon us the week before opening. I made sure I was rested but I think my performance that evening may not have had as much energy as it could have.

The biggest lesson I have learned from the “immediate theatre” is the observation that a good stage actor is able to act in film but not necessarily vice versa. I love film acting. That is my passion. The program I am in is mainly geared toward stage acting. I realize that this experience on stage is allowing me to hone my craft and prepare me for a greater chance at a successful career in film acting. *The Misanthrope* provided me with an opportunity to stretch myself and see if I could lead a show and still have it be a success.

## Personal Review of My Work

Overall I am pleased with this entire experience and with my performance. I am content I did the best I could. My best may not have been great but I feel good about what I did. This was the first play, in which, I was the main character and the overall response was that people really enjoyed the play. I spent hours and hours on studying the material and making choices. I was able to memorize long monologues and difficult dialogue. So I feel great about my progress. I'm also happy I was able to identify areas where I can improve as an actor.

I struggled with mapping out my character arc. I could have done a better job stringing all my monologues and scenes together into a clearer character arc. There were many scenes and moments where I was playing the scene but was less conscious of how that scene fit with Alceste's overarching objective and journey. If I were to redo this experience I think I would spend more time understanding the full movement of the character and how each scene and moment in each scene led to the next point in his arc. I know there is only so much time and I spent a lot of time on my character but it's good for me to learn where I can improve the next go around.

My movement was generally stiff at the beginning but got better during the performances. I worked on not dragging my feet and worked on crafting my movement across the stage. I didn't fully grasp how I was to accomplish purposeful movement until about halfway through the run of the show. I figured out during the show what it meant to move purposefully and to pick up my feet. I still don't do it well but I'm better from having to figure it out. Next time I'll figure that out during rehearsal rather than during the run of the show.

I needed to spend more time on movement. Blocking was solidified quickly. Some of the actors were less experienced and weren't as amiable to try new things during rehearsal after

blocking was set. So unfortunately there wasn't as much freedom to try new things after the first couple weeks of rehearsal. The director mentioned after the play was over that in the scene where Arsinoe is dancing for Alceste the blocking was set quickly and in the end it did not help the overall arc of the play. More time for blocking could have improved the play. There were some scenes where I felt somewhat lost and didn't understand my purpose in the scene until later in the process.

This is out of my hands but more rehearsal time to go over specific scenes that didn't get as much attention as they could have would have helped me. Specifically, my scene with Meghan, most scenes with Sarah Beth, and the scene at the end. For many of these scenes we had time for one rehearsal before being put into the full run of the play. There wasn't much time for scenes to breath and flesh out characters during the rehearsal process. Understandably, a lot of the fleshing out was done on our own time. I think because all the main actors knew they were cast since March there was a shorter rehearsal schedule relying on the actors to do research during the summer. There is wisdom in this. I've learned that personal research can't replace rehearsal in a play.

I received a lot of positive feedback about my performance with people saying I was a good actor and they enjoyed the show, however I'm not convinced I gave a standout performance. This experience gave me an opportunity to self-reflect and fine tune my acting ability. Hopefully this new knowledge and self-assessment will translate into becoming a better and more interesting actor.

Rereading my journal I realize I was too heavily focused on myself. I wish I would have spent more time and energy on mining out information about my character and developing more of a character. I spent a lot of time on the theory of acting and what approaches toward acting is

best. I spent time being critical of the director and worrying about and anticipating how audiences would judge me. If I would do less of that and spend more time on my character and the overall story I believe I would have felt much better about the whole experience and my performance. This was a good life lesson for me. Stop worrying so much about myself and everyone else but rather focus on what is needed to accomplish the task at hand. Maybe this will be my new mantra.

## **Appendix**

### **Script**

The following document is a copy of my script. It includes actions, objectives, and other ideas, thoughts, or realizations I decided to write down during rehearsal and studying my character.



# Characters

## Alceste

Stoic - resorted to

Occ - clean

Hyperbolic - making

Proverbs out of

mouth

Alceste, in love with Célimène

Philinte, his friend

Oronte, in love with Célimène

Célimène, in love with Alceste

Éliante, cousin to Célimène

Arsinoë, friend of Célimène

Acaste, a marquis

Clitandre, a marquis

Basque, Célimène's manservant

Du Bois, Alceste's manservant

Officer of the court of the Marshalls of France

Scene 1

Philinte, Alceste

Philinte: What is it?

Alceste: Oh, leave me alone, please.

Philinte: But I ask you once again what bizarre idea - in to her house?

Alceste: Let me be, I say, and get out of my sight.

Philinte: You might at least hear what people have to say without getting annoyed.

Alceste: I will get annoyed and I won't listen.

Philinte: I don't understand you when you get these sudden fits of temper. Friends though we are, I'm one of the first - this is it, I

Alceste: Me, your friend? You can get that out of your head! Until now I have professed myself such, but after what I've just seen of you I declare I can do so no longer. I'll have no share in a corrupted affection.

Philinte: You consider I'm really at fault then Alceste?

Alceste: You should be morally ashamed of yourself. What you did

was absolutely inexcusable, and utterly shocking to any honourable

man. I see you loading a man with every mark of affection, professing

the tenderest concern for his welfare, overwhelming him with assurances, protestations and offers of service. And then, when he's gone

and I ask who he is, you can scarcely tell me his name! Your

enthusiasm dies with your parting and to me you speak of him as

though he mattered nothing to you. What a base, degrading,

infamous thing it is to stoop to betraying one's integrity like that if

ever I had had the misfortune to do such a thing, I'd go and hang

myself on the spot out of sheer self-disgust.

Philinte: Well, personally, I don't see that it's a hanging matter, so

I'll ask you to be good enough to allow me to reduce your sentence

and not hang myself this time, if you don't mind.

Alceste: Oh! This is no laughing matter.

Philinte: Seriously then, what do you expect me to do?

Alceste: I expect you to be sincere and as an honourable man never

to utter a single word that you don't really mean.

Philinte: Plain & simple

Common sense!

The play is set in Paris, in the house of Célimène

Paradoxical Thought

Emphasize the operative words (e.g. in, and, etc.)

Benedict Cumberbatch

Sheela Lock Holmes

Don't be

Opposite

Minor

Business

Buttling

Cont

PHILINTE: But when someone comes along and shows such pleasure in seeing you, surely you must repay him in kind, respond to his enthusiasm as far as you can, return offer for offer, exchange vow for vow (vow?)

ALCESTE: No! I can't bear these hypocritical mannerisms that so many of your men of fashion affect. There's nothing I find more than the contortions of your protestation-mongers, the affable exchangers of famous greetings, (offic) mouthers of meaningless words, who bandy civilities with all comers and treat everyone, blockhead and man of sense, alike. What satisfaction can there be in having a man express his consideration for you, profess friendship, faith, zeal, esteem and affection, and praise you to the skies when he'll hasten to do as much for the first worthless scoundrel he runs into? No, no! No man with any self-respect wants that sort of debased and worthless esteem. There's precious little satisfaction in the most glorious of reputations if you find you have to share it with the whole universe. Esteem must be founded on some sort of preference. Bestow it on everybody and it ceases to have any meaning at all. Surrender to the foolish manners of the age and, by God, you're no friend of mine! I despise the all-embracing, indiscriminating affection which makes no distinction of merit. I want to be singled out and, to put it bluntly, the friend of the whole human race is not my line at all.

PHILINTE: But surely, if you live in the world you must observe such outward forms of civility as use and custom demand.

ALCESTE: No, I tell you! We should have no mercy whatever on the shameful trade in simulated friendship. I want us to be men and say what we really mean in all circumstances. Let what we have in our hearts be apparent in our words; let it be our hearts that speak, and let us not allow our feelings to be concealed under a mask of empty compliments.

PHILINTE: But surely there are many circumstances in which complete frankness would be ridiculous or intolerable. With all due respect to these austere standards of yours, there are times when it's as well to hide what we really feel. Would it be right and proper to go round telling people exactly what we think of them? Suppose there's someone you loathe or find disagreeable, should you tell him so?

ALCESTE: Yes! (And's exactly right) to affirm

PHILINTE: So you would tell old Émilie how badly it suits her to pass

DRINK!

herself off as a beauty at her time of life? How shocking it is to see her painting and powdering the way she does?

ALCESTE: Undoubtedly! (Now you're coming in to debate)

PHILINTE: And ~~debate~~ that he's a dreadful bore, that there's not a single person at Court who isn't tired of hearing him droning on about his military exploits and the glorious feats of his ancestors?

ALCESTE: Unquestionably! (You understand me!) to patronize

PHILINTE: You're not serious? (You don't)

ALCESTE: I most certainly am! This is an issue on which I'll spare no one. I've seen and suffered too much of it. Court and town furnish me with nothing but occasions to stoke my fury. It fills me with black depression and reduces me to utter despair to see men living as they do. I meet with nothing but base flattery, injustice, selfishness, treachery, villainy everywhere. I can't stand it any more. It infuriates me. I mean to find my gauntlet in the face of the whole human race.

PHILINTE: Your philosophical rage is a rather overdone. It makes me laugh to see you in these gloomy fits of yours. I always think that - brought up together as we were - we are like the brothers in *The School for Husbands* whose -

ALCESTE: Oh! For goodness' sake spare me your futile comparisons! The world won't change its ways on account of anything you may do. But since you're so fond of frankness, let me tell you plainly that this foible of yours makes you a laughing stock wherever you go. You just

make yourself look ridiculous to everyone by getting so incensed against the manners of the age.

ALCESTE: By God! So much the better! So much the better! That's all I ask. It's a good sign and I welcome it. I find mankind so odious that I should hate to have it approve of me.

PHILINTE: You are very hard on human nature!

ALCESTE: Yes, I'm coming to loathe it.

PHILINTE: And are all poor mortals without exception to be included in this aversion? Isn't there a living creature in the age we live in -

ALCESTE: No. It's universal. I hate all mankind, some men because they are wicked and perverse, others because they tolerate wickedness - because they show no sign of the intense loathing that vice should inspire in all virtuous hearts. Look what inexcusable indulgence people extend to the arrant scoundrel ~~that he is~~! The rogue is

with which I have a lawsuit.

AT LAW

plain to see beneath the mask! Everyone knows what he is! He may roll his eyes and speak in accents of humility, but he only fools people who are strangers here. We know that the despicable cur, who fully deserves to be stopped in his tracks, has got on in the world by dirty tricks and that the dazzling success which his methods have brought him undermines honest striving and makes virtue blush. Whatever shameful honours are heaped on him on all sides, no one really respects him as an honourable man. Call him an infamous rogue, a damnable scoundrel, and everybody agrees! No one will contradict you — and yet his cringing hypocrisy gains him acceptance everywhere. People receive him into their homes, they smile on him as he worms his way in everywhere. If there's a job to be had by lobbying, you'll see him triumph and better than passed over. God! It breaks my heart to see how men connive with vice! There are times when the urge suddenly takes me to find some solitary place and avoid all contact with humankind.

PHILINTE: Good Lord! Let's not worry so much about the manners of the age and make more allowance for human nature. Let's judge it less severely and look more kindly on its faults. What's needed in society is a flexible kind of virtue. It's wrong to be too high-principled. True reason lies in avoiding extremes and requires us to be wise in moderation. This stiff-backed passion for the virtues of ancient days is out of step with our age and accepted practice. It requires too much perfection of mere mortals. We need to move with the times and not be too rigid, and it's the height of folly for anyone to take upon himself the task of setting the world to rights. Like you, I observe many times each day things which could be better if they were done differently. But whatever I happen to see, I don't show my irritation openly as you do. I don't get hot and bothered, but take men as they are, school myself to put up with what they do and firmly believe that both at Court and in town, my self-possession is no less philosophical than your intemperate spleen.

ALCESTE: And can nothing ruffle this self-possession of yours, most rational of philosophers? Suppose a friend betrayed you, suppose someone plotted to get his hands on everything you own, or did his damndest to spread scandalous rumours about you, could you sit back and watch it happen and not be angry?

PHILINTE: Of course. I look upon these faults which you are so concerned

about as defects inseparable from human nature: it disturbs me no more to find men base, unjust or selfish than to see apes up to no good, wolves snarling or vultures ravenous for carrion.

ALCESTE: So I am to see myself betrayed, torn to pieces, robbed with <sup>tricks to stay</sup> ~~nothing to do~~ <sup>calm and</sup> ~~that I say no more.~~ <sup>agitated</sup>

PHILINTE: Indeed, it would be best if you did keep quiet. Rail less <sup>to get loose</sup> ~~against your adversary~~ <sup>to get away</sup> and give some thought to your lawsuit.

ALCESTE: I'll do no such thing. On that my mind's made up. <sup>to firm</sup> ~~to firm~~

PHILINTE: Then who do you think will use their influence in the right <sup>to give in</sup> ~~quarters on your behalf?~~

ALCESTE: I'll tell you: reason, justice, the rightness of my cause.

PHILINTE: Won't you be calling on any of the judges then?

ALCESTE: No! Is my cause doubtful or unjust? <sup>to trouble</sup> ~~to trouble~~

PHILINTE: It is not, I grant you. But your opponent will lobby and that can do you harm, so —

ALCESTE: No. I'm determined not to take a single step. Either I'm in the right or in the wrong. <sup>to activate</sup> ~~to activate~~

PHILINTE: I wouldn't count on it.

ALCESTE: I won't lift a finger. <sup>to satisfy</sup> ~~to satisfy~~

PHILINTE: You have a powerful adversary. He can bring considerable influence to bear . . .

ALCESTE: No matter. <sup>to scratch off</sup> ~~to scratch off~~

PHILINTE: You may find you've made a mistake.

ALCESTE: So be it. I'll await the outcome. <sup>to wire away</sup> ~~to wire away~~

PHILINTE: But . . .

ALCESTE: I shall have the pleasure of losing my case. <sup>to hint</sup> ~~to hint~~

PHILINTE: But surely . . .

ALCESTE: This case will show me whether people can really have the effrontery, be so wicked, so villainous, so corrupt, as to do me

injustice openly before the eyes of all the world. <sup>to clear the air</sup> ~~to clear the air~~

PHILINTE: What a man!

ALCESTE: I'd be happy to lose my case, whatever it cost me, to have the satisfaction of putting that to the test. <sup>to justify</sup> ~~to justify~~

PHILINTE: Really, Alceste, people would laugh if they heard you talk like that.

ALCESTE: So much the worse for them. <sup>to desecrate</sup> ~~to desecrate~~

PHILINTE: But do you find this rectitude that you're always insisting

on, this absolute integrity you set such store by, in the lady you're in love with? I'm surprised that while you seem to be at daggers drawn with the whole human race, you have found, in spite of everything that makes it odious to you, one member of it who has power to charm you. What amazes me even more is the strange choice on which your affections have settled. Éliante is a model of sincerity and she likes you; the prudish Arsinofé makes sheep's eyes at you, but you refuse your heart to them while Célimène binds it fast and toys with it - Célimène, whose coquettishness and love of scandal seem to chime so well with the manners of the age. How does it come about that, hating these characteristics as you do, you can tolerate their embodiment in her? Do they stop being faults when they appear in such an attractive shape? Is it that you don't you see them, or do you find excuses for them?

ALCESTE: No. My love for this young widow does not blind me to the faults I find in her. Despite the passion she inspires in me, I am the first to see them as I am to condemn them. And yet for all that, do what I may, I have to confess my weakness. I am captivated by her. I see her faults, but it makes no difference. I condemn them in vain. She makes me love her in spite of myself. Her charm is irresistible and I'm sure my love will rescue her from the follies of our times.

PHILINTE: If you do that it will be no small achievement! You think she loves you then?

ALCESTE: Heavens, yes! I shouldn't love her if I didn't think so. To what are you so concerned about your rivals?

PHILINTE: But if she has made it clear that she loves you, why is it that you are so concerned about your rivals?

ALCESTE: Because true love demands undivided affection in return. That's my sole purpose in coming here now - to open my heart to her on that very matter.

PHILINTE: Well, if it was me and I was going to fall in love, I'd be looking in the direction of her cousin Éliante. She loves you and her affection is constant and sincere. She'd be a far better and more suitable choice for you.

ALCESTE: That's true. And so the voice of reason tells me every day. But then love's not ruled by reason.

PHILINTE: I fear greatly for your love. Your hopes may well prove...

Scene ii:

ORONTE, ALCESTE, PHILINTE

ORONTE: I was informed downstairs that Éliante had gone out on an errand and Célimène too, but as they told me that you were here I came up to assure you sir, in all sincerity, of the extraordinarily high opinion I have of you, and to express the ardent ambition I have long had to be numbered among your friends. Yes, there's nothing I love more than giving merit its due sir, and I long to be united with you by the bond of friendship. I assume that the sincere friendship of a man of my rank and quality is not to be rejected. *(At this point Alceste's mind seems elsewhere and he appears not to hear what Oronte is saying to him.)* It is to you sir, if you please, that my remarks are addressed.

ALCESTE: To me sir? ALCESTE: To you sir. Have you any objection?

ORONTE: Not in the least but I'm very much surprised. I wasn't expecting such an honour.

ALCESTE: The fact, sir, that I hold you in such esteem should not surprise you. Your claims to it are universally acknowledged.

ALCESTE: Sir - ALCESTE: You enjoy an immense reputation without parallel in this country.

ORONTE: Yes, in my opinion you are a man of quite outstanding distinction.

ALCESTE: Sir - ALCESTE: May I be struck down by heaven above if I do not speak the unvarnished truth! And now permit me sir, in confirmation of my sentiments, to embrace you most heartily and solicit a place in your affection. Your hand on it, if you will! You promise me your friendship?

ALCESTE: Sir - ALCESTE: What! You decline?

ORONTE: Sir, you do me too much honour, but friendship is not quite so simple a matter. Indeed it is a profanation of the word to use it on every occasion. It is a relationship which should spring from

discerning and deliberate choice. We should be better acquainted before we commit ourselves. It might turn out that our characters may well be such that we should repent of the bargain.

ORONTE: By Jove! Spoken like a man of sense! I admire you all the more for it. Let us then leave it to time to establish this happy relationship between us. Meanwhile I am entirely at your service. If there is anything I can do for you at Court, I am known to cut some figure with His Majesty. I have his ear and he treats me, by God, with the greatest possible consideration. Once again then — count on me entirely. And now, since you are a man of taste and discrimination, may I venture to show you, by way of placing our relationship on a sound footing, a sonnet I have only recently composed? I would like your opinion as to whether it's fit to be published.

ALCESTE: Sir, I think the wrong person to pronounce on such matters. Play be good enough to excuse me.

ORONTE: But why? *to disagree*

ALCESTE: It's a failing of mine that I tend to be a little more frank in these things than I should. *to explain*

ORONTE: But that's what I want! I should have cause to be aggrieved if, when I had gone so far as to ask you to give me your honest opinion, you failed to do so or kept anything back from me.

ALCESTE: Well then, I agree, since you insist. *to give in*

ORONTE (reading): 'Sonnet' ... it's a sonnet. 'Hope' ... the lady in question has designed to give some encouragement to my hopes ...

'Hope' ... It's not lofty or elaborate — just a few simple lines ... tender and full of feeling. (He looks at Alceste at each pause.)

ALCESTE: We shall see. *to push*

ORONTE: 'Hope' ... I don't know if you'll think the style sufficiently easy and flowing or if the choice of words will please you.

ALCESTE: We shall see sir. *to drive*

ORONTE: Another thing — I should mention that I didn't spend more than a quarter of an hour on it.

ALCESTE: Let's hear it sir. The time spent on it is quite immaterial. *to get on*

ORONTE (reads): 'Hope doth assuage, 'tis true, one's pain, And for a while breeds consolation.

But, Phyllis, wherein lies the gain If on Hope's heels comes cold Frustration?'

PHILINTE: I am quite smitten with this beginning!

ALCESTE (aside): What! You have the audacity to admire that? *to condemn*

ORONTE: 'Once you showed me some munificence: Less had been better, take my word; Why did you go to such expense

If Hope was all you could afford?'

PHILINTE: Oh! Very nicely turned indeed! *Sincere question*

ALCESTE (aside to Philinte): Damn you, you vile flatterer! How can you praise such rubbish? *to rebuke*

ORONTE: 'Since on Eternity I needs must wait And fruitless passion be my fate, Death must be my last resort.

Your fond regrets afford me no comfort For, fair Phyllis, we know despair When to Hope is all that we may dare.'

PHILINTE: It has a dying fall. Quite lovely. Admirable!

ALCESTE (aside): Damn you and your fall, you lying toad. I wish you'd take a fall — and break your neck! *to arrest*

PHILINTE: I never heard lines more gracefully phrased.

ALCESTE (aside): Good God! *Exclamation*

ORONTE (to Philinte): You flatter me, sir. Perhaps you think —

PHILINTE: No, I'm not flattering you in the least.

ALCESTE (aside to Philinte): Then what are you doing, you two-faced —

ORONTE (to Alceste): And now sir, you remember what we agreed. Please give me your candid opinion. *to collect*

ALCESTE: Well sir — it's always a delicate business, for when it comes to questions of taste we all like to be flattered. But as I was saying only the other day to a person whose name I won't mention, on *look for a way to say it*

looking over some lines he had composed, a gentleman should always be careful to control that itch for scribbling to which we are so prone. *other people*

We should keep a tight rein on any desire we might have to create a stir with such diversions or else, in our eagerness to show our work, we run a risk of cutting a pretty poor sort of figure. *to clear*

ORONTE: Are you trying to tell me that I was wrong in wanting to ...

ALCESTE: No, I'm not saying that. But what I went on to tell him was how deadly the effect of a dull piece of writing can be, how it only needs a foible of that sort to ruin a man's reputation, and though one might have countless fine qualities, people only notice the weaknesses.

ORONTE: Are you saying there's something wrong with my sonnet?

ALCESTE: [No, I'm not saying that.] But to put him off writing, I did point out the harm this sort of craving has done to some very worthy people in our own times.

ORONTE: Do I write badly? Am I to assume I resemble them?  
ALCESTE: [No, I'm not saying that. But what I did say to him finally was this: do you really need to write poetry and if so, why the deuce do you insist on being published? The only people who can be excused for unleashing a bad book on the world are the poor devils who have to write for a living. Take my word for it, resist the temptation, hide what you do from the public, and don't go and prejudice the honourable reputation you enjoy at Court — however much people may urge you to do — for the sake having conferred on you by the hand of some grasping printer the wretched and ridiculous title of author. That's what I tried to impress on him.]  
ORONTE: That's all very well. I think I understand what you mean, but may I not be told what there is in my sonnet that —

ALCESTE: Frankly, the only thing to do with it is to put it away and forget it. You have formed your style on bad models. The expressions you use aren't natural. What's the meaning of 'and for a while breeds consolation?' or 'on Hope's heels comes cold Frustration'? What did you mean by 'Why did you go to such expense if Hope was all you could afford?' or 'For, fair Phyllis, we know despair When to Hope is all that we may dare'? This figurative style people pride themselves so much on is false and untrue. It's just playing with words — sheer affectation! It isn't a natural way of speaking at all. I find contemporary taste appalling in this respect. Our ancestors, crude and unpolished as they were, did very much better. I prefer to any of the stuff people admire so much nowadays an old ballad such as:

If good King Henry said to me  
'Here's Paris town, so grand, so fair:  
All this and more I'll give to thee  
If you'll forsake your own true dear,'  
I'd up and say to good Henry  
'Keep your Paris grand and fair:  
I love my sweetheart more, truly,  
Much more I love my dear.'

The rhymes may be clumsy and the style out-dated, but don't you see how much better it is than all the trumpery that offends one's

common-sense? Don't you feel that this is the voice of true love speaking?

If good King Henry said to me  
'Here's Paris town, so grand, so fair:  
All this and more I'll give to thee  
If you'll forsake your own true dear,'  
I'd up and say to good Henry  
'Keep your Paris grand and fair:  
I love my sweetheart more, truly,  
Much more I love my dear.'

That's just what a man who was really in love would say. (To critics may say, I prefer that to the overblown, flowery tinsel that people make such a fuss about.)  
ORONTE: And I, sir, maintain that my lines are excellent.

ALCESTE: You have your reasons for thinking so. Permit me to have mine which allow me to think otherwise.  
ORONTE: It is enough for me to know that other people think well of them.  
ALCESTE: That is because they possess the art of dissimulation. I do not.  
ORONTE: So you think you have a pretty good share of wit?  
ALCESTE: I should, if I could see anything in your verse.  
ORONTE: I shall manage very well without your approval.  
ALCESTE: I'm afraid you'll have to.  
ORONTE: I should like to see you try to compose something of your own on the same theme.

ALCESTE: I might well have the misfortune to do equally badly, but I'd take good care not to show other people the result.  
ORONTE: You speak with a good deal of assurance, sir. Such self-opinionated —

ALCESTE: I suggest, sir, that you pursue your search for flattery elsewhere.  
ORONTE: Come little man, adopt a less lofty tone.  
ALCESTE: Upon my word, Sir High and Mighty, I shall adopt whatever tone I like...  
PHILINTE (coming between them): Now gentlemen! That's enough! Please leave it at that!  
ORONTE: Ah! I'm at fault — I admit it. I'll take my leave. (To Alceste, ironically:) I am, sir, your most devoted.  
ALCESTE (ironically): And I, sir, your inmost obedient.

TO TEASE  
Scene iii.

PHILINTE, ALCESTE

ALCESTE: May I speak frankly Madame? I'm far from pleased with the way you behave. I'm beginning to find it intolerable. I can see that we shall have to go our separate ways. *Yes, it would be deceiving you to torment you anything else. We shall undoubtedly reach breaking-point sooner or later. Even if I gave you my word to the contrary a thousand times over I should be unable to stand by it.*

PHILINTE: Well, you see? That's where your precious sincerity has landed you, with a damned awkward business on your hands! I saw perfectly well that Oronte wanted to be flattered and -

ALCESTE: Don't talk to me! *TO REFUSE*

PHILINTE: But -

ALCESTE: Leave me alone! *TO TURN DOWN*

PHILINTE: It's too -

ALCESTE: Go away! *TO REJECT*

PHILINTE: If I -

ALCESTE: Not another word! *TO BLOCK*

PHILINTE: But what -

ALCESTE: I won't listen. *TO REFUSE*

PHILINTE: But -

ALCESTE: Still there? *TO DENOUNCE*

PHILINTE: You insult -

ALCESTE: Oh God! That's enough! Stop following me about *(He goes out)*. *TO LEAVE*

PHILINTE: Oh! Don't be absurd. I'm not going to leave you. *(He waits follows.)*

ALCESTE: May I speak frankly Madame? I'm far from pleased with the way you behave. I'm beginning to find it intolerable. I can see that we shall have to go our separate ways. *Yes, it would be deceiving you to torment you anything else. We shall undoubtedly reach breaking-point sooner or later. Even if I gave you my word to the contrary a thousand times over I should be unable to stand by it.*

PHILINTE: Well, you see? That's where your precious sincerity has landed you, with a damned awkward business on your hands! I saw perfectly well that Oronte wanted to be flattered and -

ALCESTE: Don't talk to me! *TO REFUSE*

PHILINTE: But -

ALCESTE: Leave me alone! *TO TURN DOWN*

PHILINTE: It's too -

ALCESTE: Go away! *TO REJECT*

PHILINTE: If I -

ALCESTE: Not another word! *TO BLOCK*

PHILINTE: But what -

ALCESTE: I won't listen. *TO REFUSE*

PHILINTE: But -

CÉLIMÈNE: So from what I see, you only insisted on seeing me home so that you could scold me.

ALCESTE: I'm not scolding you. But, Madame, you have a way of according your affections too freely to anyone who happens to come along. You have too many admirers forever hanging round you and I just cannot bear it. *TO LEAVE*

CÉLIMÈNE: So you blame me for having admirers? Can I prevent people from finding me attractive? When they are kind enough to go to the trouble of coming to see me, am I supposed to reach for a stick and drive them from my door?

ALCESTE: No Madame, it's not a stick you want. But you need to be less tolerant, less accessible to their advances. I know you can't help being attractive wherever you are, but your attitude encourages those who fall under the spell of your glances. Your indulgence to those who surrender completes the conquest begun by your beauty. The alluring hopes you hold out keep them dancing attendance upon you.

If you were less free with your favours, you would thin the ranks of those who languish and sigh for you. You might at least tell me how it is that your friend Clitandre has the good fortune to find such favour with you. On what qualities, on what sublime virtue is your regard for him founded? Is it the length of his little finger-nail that has acquired your esteem? Have you, like the rest of fashionable society, succumbed to the ostentatious merits of his blond perwig?

Is it perhaps the wide frills at his knees that have captured your heart or his accumulation of ribbons that you find so enchanting? Has he endeared himself by the charms of his billowing breeches while he protests that he is your slave? Or is it his laugh or that falsetto voice of his that have found the secret of pleasing you?

CÉLIMÈNE: It's most unfair of you to take umbrage on his account. You know perfectly well why I keep in with him. Don't you see that he can interest all his friends in my lawsuit - as he has in fact promised to do?

ALCESTE: Re-sign yourself to losing your case, Madame, with a firm to mind. Don't try to ingratiate yourself with a man whose rivalry is so offensive to me.

CÉLIMÈNE: You're becoming jealous of the whole universe.

ALCESTE: That's because the whole universe enjoys your favour. *TO CARRY*

CÉLIMÈNE: But shouldn't the very fact that I distribute my favour so widely afford some reassurance to your unquiet heart? Wouldn't you have more reason for being offended if you saw me bestowing it on one person?

ALCESTE: But I ask you, Madame, what advantage do I — whom you

CÉLIMÈNE: The satisfaction of knowing that you are loved, <sup>is that you</sup>

ALCESTE: And what reason have I to cherish any such belief? <sup>is that you</sup>

CÉLIMÈNE: I think when I have gone so far as to tell you so, such an admission should be quite sufficient.

ALCESTE: But what assurance do I have that you aren't perhaps saying as much to others at the same time? <sup>to mock</sup>

CÉLIMÈNE: A pretty compliment from a lover, I must say! And a nice opinion you have of me! Very well! To relieve you of any such concern, I here and now unsay all that I have said in the past. Now

ALCESTE: By God! Why do I have to be in love with you? If I could only take back my heart from out of your hands, how thankful I

should be for the blessing! I make no secret of it — I have done everything I possibly can to break this cruel infatuation, but so far

all to no purpose. It must be for my sins that I love you as I do.

CÉLIMÈNE: Love such as yours is unprecedented.

ALCESTE: Yes, On that count I can challenge the whole world! My love is beyond all imagining. No man, Madame, has ever loved as I

do.

CÉLIMÈNE: And you certainly have a novel way of showing it! You love people so that you can quarrel with them. The only words you can find to express your passion are offensive and ungracious. I've

never heard of a lover who grumbled and scolded the way you do.

ALCESTE: But it is entirely within your power to put an end to my black moods. Let's be done with all these arguments, I beseech you. Let

us be entirely open with each other and see if we can stop ... to

## Scene ii.

CÉLIMÈNE, ALCESTE, BASQUE

CÉLIMÈNE: What is it?

BASQUE: Acaste is downstairs.

CÉLIMÈNE: Very well. Show him up. <sup>to deny</sup> *(Exit Basque.)*

ALCESTE: What! Am I never to have a word with you alone? Must you always be willing to receive callers? Can you never bring yourself

to say, not even for one single moment, that you are not at home?

CÉLIMÈNE: Would you have me offend him?

ALCESTE: You consider people's feelings too much for my liking.

CÉLIMÈNE: He's the sort of man who would never forgive me if he knew that his presence was unwelcome.

ALCESTE: And why should that bother you? <sup>to scout</sup>

CÉLIMÈNE: Heavens! The goodwill of people like him is important. He's one of those men who have acquired, goodness knows how,

the privilege of making their opinions heard in Court circles. You find them butting in to every conversation. Though they can do you

no good, they may do you harm. Whatever support you may have elsewhere, you should never get embroiled with that braying crowd.

ALCESTE: In other words, you'll always find reasons for remaining on good terms with everyone — whoever they may be and whatever

they may do. You are so cautious in your judgements, that ...

*Door opening*  
*interrupts me*

## Scene iii.

BASQUE, ALCESTE, CÉLIMÈNE

BASQUE: Clirandre is here as well, Madame.

ALCESTE: Oh, of course, he would be! *(Makes as if to leave.)* <sup>to take off</sup>

CÉLIMÈNE: Where are you running off to?

ALCESTE: I'm going. <sup>to rest</sup>

CÉLIMÈNE: Stay.

ALCESTE: What for?

CÉLIMÈNE: Do stay.

ALCESTE: I can't.

CÉLIMÈNE: I want you to.

<sup>to pursue</sup>

<sup>to denance</sup>



ALCESTE: It's no use. These conversations only bore me. It's asking too much to want me to put up with them.

CÉLIMÈNE: But I want you to, I want you to!

ALCESTE: No. I can't do it.

CÉLIMÈNE: Very well then. Go! Be off. Do as you please!

Scene iv:

ÉLIANTE, PHILINTE, ACASTE, CLITANDRE,

ALCESTE, CÉLIMÈNE, BASQUE

ÉLIANTE: The two marquises are coming up with us. Did no one come to tell you?

CÉLIMÈNE: Yes. (To Basque.) Chairs for the company. (To Alceste.)

ALCESTE: Haven't you gone?

CÉLIMÈNE: No Madame. I intend to make you explain your mind - to their satisfaction or mine.

CÉLIMÈNE: Hush!

ALCESTE: You shall explain yourself here and now. To defend

CÉLIMÈNE: Have you lost your senses?

ALCESTE: Not at all! You shall say where you stand. To fight

CÉLIMÈNE: Oh!

ALCESTE: You must take one side or the other. To make

CÉLIMÈNE: I suppose this is a joke?

ALCESTE: No, but choose you shall. I've been patient for too long. To

CLITANDRE: Egad! I've have come straight from the Louvre. Cléonte

has been making a perfect fool of himself there at the king's levée.<sup>2</sup>

Has he no friends who could in charity advise him how to behave?

CÉLIMÈNE: He certainly has a habit of making himself look ridiculous

in company. His manner is always very conspicuous and when one

sees him again after an interval, it seems even odder.

ACASTE: Egad, talking of odd fellows I have just had a dose of one of

the most tiresome of them all - I mean that garrulous bore, Damon!

He kept me out of my sedan chair for an hour, if you please, and in

the blazing sun too!

CÉLIMÈNE: How he does talk! He contrives to say nothing at the most

inordinate length and I can never make any sense of what he is

talking about. It's like listening to so much noise.

ÉLIANTE (to Philine): Not a bad start at all. The conversation's already taking a lively turn at pulling one's acquaintances to pieces!

CLITANDRE: Now what about Timante? Don't you think he's an admirable character?

CÉLIMÈNE: The complete mystery man, from head to foot! He throws you an absent-minded glance as he bustles by, for he's always so busy though he has nothing to do! Anything he has to tell you is conveyed with signs and grimaces - it's quite a performance and utterly overwhelming! He's forever interrupting the conversation because he has some secret or other to confide to you, but there's never anything in it. He converts the merest trifle into a major scandal and everything, even his 'good morning', has to be whispered in your ear.

ACASTE: And Géralde, Madame?

CÉLIMÈNE: Oh! That pretentious gossip! He can never throw off his lordly manner. He only moves in the highest circles and never mentions anybody below the rank of duke, prince or princess. He's obsessed with the quality and can talk of nothing but horses, carriages and dogs. He speaks most familiarly to people of the highest rank, so much so that he has forgotten how to use plain 'Monsieur'.

CÉLIMÈNE: They say he's on very good terms with Bélise.

CLITANDRE: That empty-headed creature - she's dreary company I must say. I suffer agonies when she comes to call on me. It's one continual struggle to find something to say to her. She's so utterly unresponsive that she just kills all conversation stone dead. You clutch at all the usual banal topics to try to break down her stupid silence, but it's not the least use - the fine weather or the rain, how cold it is or how hot it has been - before long you've exhausted them all and her visit, unbearable enough anyway, becomes more and more awful as it drags out its hideous length. You may ask the time and yawn as much as you like, but she'll no more stir than a block of wood.

ACASTE: And what do you make of Adraste?

CÉLIMÈNE: Too conceited for words! The man's blown up with his own importance. He's forever sounding off about the Court because he thinks he's not appreciated there. There's never an appointment made or a place or preferment offered that isn't an injustice to his own idea of himself.

CLITANDRE: And young Cléon? Everyone who is anybody gathers at his house nowadays. What do you say about him?

is not a good character!  
this

is not a good character!  
this

is not a good character!  
this

is not a good character!  
this

CÉLIMÈNE: That he owes his reputation to his cook. People don't go to see him, they go to visit his table.

ÉLIANTE: He does go to the trouble of providing good food.

CÉLIMÈNE: Yes, if only he didn't serve up his own company with it! His stupidity takes a good deal of stomachaching. To my mind, it completely ruins the dinners he gives.

PHILINTE: His uncle, Damis, is highly thought of. What do you say about him Madame?

CÉLIMÈNE: He's a friend of mine.

PHILINTE: I think he's sound, a man who looks sensible enough.

CÉLIMÈNE: Yes, but what annoys me is that he's always trying to be clever. He's so high and mighty and always so obviously trying to be witty in everything he says. Since he's taken it into his head to show how smart he is, there's just no suiting his taste — he's so difficult to please. He insists on finding fault with everything anyone writes, and he thinks that to praise is beneath the dignity of a man of taste, that to find something to criticize is the sign of a scholarly mind, that only fools allow themselves to admire things or be amused, and that he demonstrates his superiority to everyone else by disapproving of all contemporary works. Even in ordinary conversation either he'll find something to cavil at or else the subject will be so far beneath his notice that he'll just fold his arms and look down in pity from the height of his own wisdom on everything that anyone says.

ACASTE: Dammit! That's got him to a T!

CLITANDRE: You have a wonderful gift for capturing people to the life!

ALCESTE: Aye! Stick to it, gentlemen, like the true courtiers that you are! You spare no one. Everyone suffers in turn. But let any one of them appear on the scene and you would all rush to meet him, shake his hand warmly, and in the most flattering terms protest your eternal devotion.

CLITANDRE: But why get cross with us? If what's been said offends you, it's the lady here you should address your reproaches to.

ALCESTE: No, dammit! I blame you. It's your toadying laughter that encourages her to these slanderous outbursts. Her satirical humour is fed and watered by your wicked flattery. She would find less satisfaction in her mockery if she saw that you did not applaud her.

Flouters are always to blame for the vices which prevail among mankind.

PHILINTE: Why are you so ready to show such concern for people you yourself would condemn for the very same reasons?

CÉLIMÈNE: But surely the gentleman must be allowed to contradict! Would you have him reduced to sharing the common view of things?

Is he to be prevented from taking any opportunity of displaying the contrary spirit heaven bestowed on him? He can never go along with other people's opinions. He must always take the opposite view.

He'd think he was cutting a very ordinary figure if he found himself agreeing with anyone else. He's so fond of contradicting that he often takes up an argument against himself and opposes his own sentiments as soon as he hears other people expressing them.

ALCESTE: The laugh's on your side Madame, there's no doubt about that! You may safely indulge your satire against me.

PHILINTE: But it is true none the less that you're always up in arms against everything people say. You yourself admit to being equally intolerant, whether they're praising or blaming.

ALCESTE: Dammit, it's because other people are never right, because there's always a good reason for being angry with them, because I observe that in all matters they are invariably as misguided in their praise as they are rash in their condemnation.

CÉLIMÈNE: But —

ALCESTE: No Madame, no. I'll say it if it kills me. You take a delight in things I find intolerable, and it's downright wrong of these people here to be encouraging you to adopt the very habits they criticize you for.

CLITANDRE: Well, I don't know about that. But I don't mind admitting freely that I've always thought the lady perfection itself.

ACASTE: ~~To me she's everything that's charming and gracious — if she has any faults, I haven't noticed them.~~

ALCESTE: But I notice them and, far from shutting my eyes to them, she knows I make a point of reproaching her on their account. The more you love someone, the less you should flatter them. The proof of true love is to be unsparing in fault-finding. I personally would banish any lover so faint-hearted as to agree with all my opinions and feebly and obsequiously pander to my extravagances.

CÉLIMÈNE: Then if you had your way as to how lovers behaved, we would have to show our feelings by avoiding all tenderness and define the supreme testimony of perfect love as being rude to whoever it is we're in love with.

ÉLIANTE: That isn't really how love works at all for most people. You find that a man in love always justifies his own choice. His passion makes him blind to all faults and in his eyes everything in the woman he loves is lovable. He counts her defects as perfections or finds flattering names for them. If she's pale, it's the pale beauty of the jasmine flower. She may be swarthy enough to frighten the horses, but for him she's an adorable brunette. If she's thin, she's slender and graceful; if fat, she has a queenly dignity; if she neglects her appearance, slight though her attractions may be, she is said to have a 'careless beauty'; if she's tall, she'll have the majesty of a goddess; if she's short, she's an abridged version of all the virtues under heaven! If she's proud, her nature is regal. If she's sly, she's clever. If she's stupid, she's all heart. If she talks all the time, she's cheerful. If she never talks at all, she's proper and modest. And so it is that the true and passionate lover worships the very faults of the woman he loves.<sup>3</sup>

ALCESTE: Well for my part I maintain — *to agree*  
CÉLIMÈNE: Suppose we drop the subject now and take a turn in the gallery. ~~Are you going~~ *to agree* Are you going, gentlemen?

CLITANDRE and ACASTE (together): By all means, Madam.

ALCESTE (to Célime): You seem very much concerned lest they should go. *to sit at couch and lounge* To Clitandre and Acaste: Leave whenever you please, gentlemen, *to sit out* but warn you I shall stay until you go.

ACASTE: Unless I thought the lady would be inconvenienced, I could stay all day.

CLITANDRE: Provided I return for the hour of His Majesty's retiring, I have no business that need call me away.

CÉLIMÈNE (to Alceste): You think this amusing, I suppose?

ALCESTE: Not in the least, but we'll see whether I'm the one you want to go. *to challenge*

## Scene v:

BASQUE, ALCESTE, CÉLIMÈNE, ÉLIANTE, ACASTE,  
PHILINTE, CLITANDRE

BASQUE (to Alceste): Sir, there's a man outside who'd like to speak to you on business which he says won't wait. *to dismiss*

ALCESTE: Tell him I have no business of such urgency.

BASQUE: He has a long pleated coat with gold braid all over it.

CÉLIMÈNE (to Alceste): Go and see what it is, or else have him come up.

ALCESTE (to the Officer as he enters): Come in sir. What is it you want? *to mock*

*He's a black in*

## Scene vi:

OFFICER, ALCESTE, CÉLIMÈNE, ÉLIANTE, ACASTE,  
PHILINTE, CLITANDRE

OFFICER: I needs a word with you sir.

ALCESTE: You may say your piece here. Tell me what this is about. *to affirm*

OFFICER: The Marshals of France,<sup>4</sup> whose warrant I bear, require you to appear before them, sir, immediately.

ALCESTE: Who? Me sir? *to disagree*

OFFICER: You sir. In person.

ALCESTE: For what purpose? *to advise*

PHILINTE: It's that absurd squabble with Oronte.

CÉLIMÈNE (to Philinte): What's this?

PHILINTE: Oronte and he had words about some trifling verses which he didn't think much of. They want to nip the quarrel in the bud.

ALCESTE: I won't stand for any miserable compromise. *to reject*

PHILINTE: But you must obey the summons. Come, get ready.

ALCESTE: What sort of compromise do they intend to force on us? Will those gentlemen sentence me to approve the lines we quarrelled

about? I won't go back on what I said. I still think they're dreadful. *to dismiss*

PHILINTE: If you would only be a little more —

ALCESTE: I won't budge an inch. The poem is execrable! *to exonerate*

PHILINTE: You must try to be reasonable. Come along.

ALCESTE: I'll go — but there's no power on earth that will make me retract.

PHILINTE: Let us go and put in an appearance.

ALCESTE: Short of His Majesty's express command to approve the verses all this fuss is about, I shall never cease to maintain, by God, that they are bad and that the man who wrote them deserves to be hanged.

*(To Clitandre and Acaste who are laughing.)* Confound it gentlemen! I was not aware I was so amusing.

CÉLIMÈNE: Go quickly and obey the summons.

ALCESTE: I'm going Madame, but I shall come straight back to finish our discussion.

### Act III

#### Scene i:

CLITANDRE, ACASTE

CLITANDRE: You look remarkably pleased with yourself, my dear Marquis. Everything amuses you and you haven't a care in the world. Tell me frankly, and looking at the matter squarely: do you really believe that you have good reason for looking so cheerful?

ACASTE: Egad! When I examine myself closely I can't see any reason for dissatisfaction. I'm rich, I'm young, I come of a house which can with some reason account itself noble. By virtue of my birth and the precedence it gives me, I believe there are very few posts which are beyond my reach. As to valour, which we should, of course, put before everything else, I think I may say in all modesty that I'm known not to be wanting in that respect. I have shown that I can pursue an affair of honour with sufficient vigour and boldness. Brains I have beyond question, with good taste sufficient to pass judgement and give an opinion on everything without benefit of study, to sit on the stage and perform as a critic at first nights (occasions I do not on) and give a rousing lead to the audience at all the fine passages that deserve applause. I'm pretty adroit, have a good manner and good looks, particularly fine teeth, and a very lithe figure. As for knowing how to dress, well, not to flatter myself unduly, I defy

anyone to compete with me in that department. I'm as popular as any man can be, attractive to women, and stand well with His Majesty. I think that with such advantages, my dear Marquis, a man might rightly feel pleased with himself anywhere.

CLITANDRE: Yes, but finding easy conquests elsewhere as you do, why is it that you sigh in vain here?

ACASTE: Me? Sigh in vain? Damn me! I'm not the sort of man to put up with any woman's indifference, nor am I inclined to. It's all very well for fellows who are wanting in any sort of grace or distinction whatever to burn for unyielding beauties, languish at their feet, and submit to their rigours with undying constancy. They may resort to sighing and tears in an attempt to obtain by assiduous courtship the favours they don't get and don't deserve. But men of my stamp, Marquis, men of my stamp are not in the habit of giving their hearts on credit and doing all the paying themselves. No, no! Rare though the merits of the fair sex may be, I contend that we, heaven be praised, have our value as they have theirs, and that it's unreasonable that any of them should enjoy the honour of a love such as mine without it costing her anything. At least, to keep the scales even, there should be some give and take on both sides.

CLITANDRE: You think then, Marquis, that you stand pretty well here? ACASTE: I have some grounds for thinking so, Marquis.

CLITANDRE: Believe me, you should rid yourself of any such illusion. You are flattering yourself, my dear fellow — it's sheer self-deception!

ACASTE: Oh! Of course I'm flattering myself and being blind!

CLITANDRE: But what reason have you for thinking you are so fortunate?

ACASTE: I flatter myself!

CLITANDRE: On what basis are your hopes founded?

ACASTE: Self-deception!

CLITANDRE: Have you any positive proof?

ACASTE: I tell you, I deceive myself.

CLITANDRE: Has Célimène given you some secret assurance of her feelings?

ACASTE: No, I am cruelly used!

CLITANDRE: Give me a straight answer, please!

ACASTE: I meet with nothing but rebuffs.

CLITANDRE: Oh! Just stop joking for a moment and tell me: what reason has she given you to hope?

ACASTE: I am a spurned wretch and you are the lucky one. She detests me. One of these days I shall have to go and hang myself.

CLITANDRE: Well now Marquis, couldn't we both come to an understanding as to how we conduct our courtship in future? If one of us can show some proof of the preference Célimène has for him, let the other give way to him as the successful suitor and so rid him of a troublesome rival.

ACASTE: By God! Now that's the sort of talk I like! I'll be glad to agree to this arrangement. But hush! Here she . . .

## Scene ii:

CÉLIMÈNE, ACASTE, CLITANDRE

CÉLIMÈNE: Still here?

CLITANDRE: It's love that detains us Madame.

CÉLIMÈNE: I heard a carriage below. Do you know who it is?  
CLITANDRE. No.

## Scene iii:

BASQUE, CÉLIMÈNE, ACASTE, CLITANDRE

BASQUE: Arsinoé is coming up to see you Madame.

CÉLIMÈNE: What does that woman want with me?

BASQUE: Éliante is talking to her downstairs.

CÉLIMÈNE: What can she be thinking of? Who on earth asked her to come here?

ACASTE: She has a reputation everywhere of being the most complete prude. She's so pious that —

CÉLIMÈNE: Yes, she's all hypocrisy! She's completely worldly at heart. Her only interest is in catching a man — so far without any success — and she can't restrain her envy when she sees anyone else with admirers. Because her own sorry charms are ignored by everybody, she's forever up in arms against the blindness of the age, trying to conceal the awful emptiness of her existence beneath a pretence of virtue and modesty and consoling herself for her waning attractions by branding as sinful the pleasures she has no chance of enjoying

herself. But a lover would be very acceptable to the lady. She even has a fancy for Alceste and regards the attentions he pays me as an insult to her beauty. According to her I am stealing something that's hers! So her barely concealed spite and jealousy find outlets in underhand attacks on me at every opportunity. It all seems utterly stupid to me. She's really the silliest, most tiresome . . .

## Scene iv:

ARSINOÉ, CÉLIMÈNE

CÉLIMÈNE: Ah! What happy chance brings you here? Madame, in all honesty, I have been so worried about you.

ARSINOÉ: I came about something I thought it was my duty to tell you.

CÉLIMÈNE: Heaven be praised! I'm so pleased to see you.

(*Clitandre and Acaste leave, laughing.*)

ARSINOÉ: They couldn't have chosen a better moment to go.

CÉLIMÈNE: Shall we sit down?

ARSINOÉ: No, there's no need for that Madame. Since friends have a particular duty to each other in matters which may concern them most directly, and because nothing is more important than honour and propriety, I have come to demonstrate my friendship for you by telling you of something which touches your own reputation. Yesterday I was with some extremely God-fearing people when, the conversation turning upon you, your behaviour and the sensation it causes, were, unhappily, not considered commendable. The crowds of men you permit to come calling, your flirtatiousness, and the talk there is about it, found all too many critics and were more severely judged than I would have wished. You may imagine which side I tried to take! I did all I could to defend you. I made every excuse for you on the ground that you meant no harm by such things. I offered to go bail for your goodness of heart, but, as you know, there are things in life which, with the best will in the world, one cannot defend. I was obliged to agree that your behaviour did bring a measure of discredit upon you, that it created an unfortunate impression in many quarters, that all sorts of unpleasant stories are going the rounds, and that, if you were so minded, your whole manner of life

could well be made less open to criticism. Not that I really believe your virtue to be compromised. Heaven preserve me from thinking any such thing! But people are ready to seize upon the slightest hint of misconduct and it is not enough to live sufficient unto oneself. You are, I believe Madame, much too sensible not to take this useful advice in good part or to believe that I have any motive other than concern for your own best interests.

CÉLIMÈNE: Madame, I really am most deeply grateful to you. Your advice places me in your debt and, far from taking it ill, I propose to return the favour immediately by giving you information which equally concerns your own reputation. Just as you have demonstrated your friendship by telling me what people were saying about me, so I in turn will follow your well-meant example and tell you what they are saying about you. At a house where I was paying a call the other day, I met some exceptionally good people who were discussing what constituted a virtuous life, and the conversation turning on you Madame; your severe principles and excessive piety were not accounted good models: the affected gravity with which you behave, your everlasting sermons on morals and propriety, your habit of exclaiming and frowning at the least hint of indecency to which an innocently ambiguous word may give rise, your high opinion of yourself and your pitying condescension for everyone else, your perpetual moralizing and the sourness with which you condemn things which are in reality innocent and pure – all this, if I may speak frankly, was quite unanimously condemned. 'What is the use', they said, 'of her modest bearing and her outward appearance of virtue, if everything else contradicts it? She's meticulous about saying her prayers, and yet she beats her servants and never pays them. She makes great parade of her piety in devout circles and yet she paints her face and tries to make herself look attractive. She covers up the nudity in paintings but she's not averse to the real thing!' Of course I took your part against the whole company and roundly charged them with slandering you. But they were all united against me and their conclusion was that you would be well advised to concern yourself less with other people's behaviour and more with your own, that we should examine ourselves thoroughly before condemning others, that strictures on our neighbours carry more weight if our own lives are exemplary, and that when it comes to the point it's far

better to leave such matters to the men of the cloth whom Heaven has made responsible for them. You are, I believe Madame, much too sensible not to take this useful advice in good part or to believe that I have any motive other than concern for your own best interests.

ARSINOË: One inevitably lays oneself open by offering any word of reproach, but I did not expect such a reply. I perceive, Madame, from the bitterness of your tone that my warning, though given in all sincerity, has wounded you deeply.

CÉLIMÈNE: On the contrary Madame, if people were wiser, these mutual exchanges would become the norm. If we were prepared to be honest, we might put an end to our great blindness about ourselves. It rests entirely with you to say whether we should continue these friendly offices with the same enthusiasm as we have begun and make a point of repeating to each other everything that we hear – you of me and I, Madame, of you.

ARSINOË: Oh! I could never hear anything said against you Madame. I'm the one who has all the faults.

CÉLIMÈNE: Madame, I don't believe there's anything that can't be praised or criticized, and everyone is right in what they say, according to their age and tastes. There's a season for love and another for prudishness, and we may consciously choose the latter when the hey-day of our youth has passed – it may serve to conceal some of life's disappointments! I don't say I shan't follow your example one day – there's no saying what age will bring us to – but you must agree, Madame, that twenty is not the age for being prim.

ARSINOË: Really! You pride yourself on a very small advantage! You make far too much of your youth. Whatever the difference in our ages may be it is not so great that it warrants making such a fuss about. Moreover I don't know why you are getting so cross Madame, nor what reason you have for turning on me like this.

CÉLIMÈNE: Nor do I know why it is that wherever you are, you go out of your way to attack me. Must you forever be taking your resentment out on me? Can I help it if men take no notice of you? If they find me attractive and insist on paying me every day those same attentions you would like to see me deprived? What of, what can I do about it? It's not my fault. You have a clear field. It's not me who's preventing you being attractive enough to bring them running.

ARSINOË: Dear me! Do you think I worry about the number of admirers

you so pride yourself on? Or that one can't perfectly well guess the price that's set nowadays on their attentions? Would you have us believe, things being the way they are, that they come flocking round you simply for your good qualities, and that they are happy to burn with pure love and court you for your virtues alone? People can easily see through your subtleties: no one's taken in by them! I know women endowed with every quality to inspire love, but they don't encourage men to come to their houses. It follows that we can draw the conclusion that men's affections aren't gained without making considerable concessions, that they don't love us just for our looks, and that all their attentiveness has to be bought. So don't be so puffed up with pride in your petty triumphs! Moderate the arrogant opinion you have of your own beauty which makes you so contemptuous of others! If one envied your conquests, I think one could do as other people do — abandon all restraint and let you see that lovers can be had when we've a mind to have them.

CÉLIMÈNE, Have them then, by all means Madam! Let's see how you do it. Show us the secret, try to make yourself attractive and —

ARSINOË: Let us drop this discussion Madame, or it may try both our tempers too far. I should have taken my leave already had my carriage not kept me waiting.

CÉLIMÈNE: You may stay as long as you please Madame. There's no occasion for hurry; I won't weary you with the customary civilities but shall leave you to better company. (*Enter Alceste.*) The gentleman who has just arrived most opportunely will take my place and entertain you better than I can. Alceste, I must go and write a note which I can't very well postpone without being thought remiss. Stay with this lady and she'll the more easily excuse my rudeness. (*Exit.*)

ARSINOË: You see, she wishes me to speak with you for a moment while I'm waiting for my carriage to come. She could have offered me no greater pleasure than this opportunity to have a conversation with you. Of course, we all love and admire men of outstanding abilities, but there is something about you, some mysterious power,

which makes me deeply concerned for your interests. I only wish the Court would turn a more propitious eye on your merits and treat you more justly. You have every reason to complain. It makes me very angry to see the days pass and nothing at all is done for you.

ALCESTE: For me Madame? On what grounds could I make any claim? What services am I supposed to have rendered the State? What have I done, may I ask, that is so outstanding that I have reason to complain that the Court does nothing for me? *to Alceste*

ARSINOË: Not all those on whom the Court looks with favour have rendered the kind of distinguished service you mean. Opportunity is needed as well as ability, and in fact the talents and abilities which you display ought to be —

ALCESTE: Good Lord! Let us say no more about my abilities, I beseech you! Why do you think the Court should be bothered about them? The Court would have enough to do, more than enough, if it had to go round unearthing people's abilities! *to Arsinoe*

ARSINOË: Outstanding abilities unearth themselves. Yours are very highly spoken of in many quarters. I may say that only yesterday I twice heard you praised in the most influential circles by people of great consequence.

ALCESTE: Why Madame! They praise everyone nowadays. This is an age which shows no discrimination whatever in that respect. Brilliant gifts are attributed to everybody in equal degree. It's no longer an honour to be praised: we have praises coming out of our ears. Praise is thrown around wholesale. Why! My valet has had a mention in the newspapers! *to Alceste*

ARSINOË: Nevertheless, I really wish a post at Court had more appeal for you, so that you were more in the public eye. If you showed the slightest inclination that way, I could pull a few strings. I have good friends whom I could ask to use their influence on your behalf and smooth the way for you.

ALCESTE: And what would you have me do in such a post Madame? My character is such that I should stay well away from such things. I'm not suited by nature to the atmosphere of the Court. I don't feel in it. My main gift is for frankness and sincerity. I have no talent for deceiving people with words. A man who can't hide what he thinks shouldn't stay too long in such places. Away from the Court one no

doubt misses the influence and the honours it dispenses these days. But in forgoing those advantages one at least avoids the humiliation of making a fool of oneself and suffering many a cruel rebuff, or having to praise Monsieur So-and-So's poems, dance attendance on Lady Such-and-Such, or put up with the inanities of our inimitable marquises.

My love to you to couch

ARSINOË: Well, since you prefer it, suppose we leave the subject of the Court. But I can't help observing how much I deplore your love affair. If I may tell you frankly how I see it, I could have wished your affections had been more wisely bestowed. You deserve a much happier fate. The lady you are so smitten with is not worthy of you.

Proclaim my love

ALCESTE: Kindly remember when you say such things, Madame, that the lady in question is your friend.

to stop

ARSINOË: Yes, but it really does go against my conscience to let her continue to wrong you any further. It distresses me too much when I see what position you're in. I warn you. She's deceiving you.

ALCESTE: That's very kind and considerate of you Madame. Information of that kind is most gratifying to a man in love.

to reason

ARSINOË: Yes, although she's my friend, she is, and I am not afraid to say so, unworthy of the love of an honourable man. Her affection for you is mere pretence.

Now we hear signs

ALCESTE: That may well be Madame. We cannot see into other people's hearts, but you might in charity have refrained from putting such thoughts into my head.

to stiff out

ARSINOË: If you prefer not to be undeceived I need say no more. That's easy enough.

I want to know what you are saying

ALCESTE: No. In a case like this, whatever we are told can't be as bad as remaining in doubt, but I myself would rather be told nothing except what can be plainly demonstrated.

to pay

ARSINOË: Very well, I'll say no more. You shall have all the demonstration you want. Yes, I won't ask you to believe anything but your own eyes. Give me your hand as far as my house and there I'll give you incontrovertible proof of the lady's unfaithfulness. Should you then have eyes for the charms of another, it might be possible to offer you something by way of consolation.

Act IV

Scene i:

ÉLIANTE, PHILINTE

pull out good thing out with me. Give Sirp

PHILINTE: No, I never came across a more pig-headed man nor a lawsuit where it was so hard to reach an understanding. They tried every way to shift him but it was no use. There was simply no getting him to change his mind. I don't suppose their Lordships' wisdom was ever exercised by such a bizarre case before. 'No, your Honours,' he said, 'I will not withdraw. I'll agree to anything you like except that ... What is he offended at? What does he say I've done? Suppose he doesn't write well, is that a blot on his honour? What does my opinion matter that he should have taken it so much amiss? One can be a worthy man and still write wretched verse. Honour is not involved in these things. I consider him an accomplished gentleman in every way, a man of quality, courage, ability, anything you like, but a very poor poet indeed. If you wish I'll praise his retinue and the style he keeps up, his horsemanship, his skill in arms or in dancing, but as for his verse - no! There he must excuse me. If people can't manage to do better than that, they should let poetry well alone - unless they're forced to take it up on pain of death!' In the end the most he could be persuaded to bring himself to say by way of concession or amends - and he thought he was being very conciliatory - was 'I regret, sir, to be so difficult to please and I do most heartily wish, out of respect for you, that I could have thought better of your somewhat.' Whereupon to bring the matter to a conclusion they made them shake hands and left it at that.

Don't say from things about the

ÉLIANTE: Yes, his behaviour is most peculiar, but I must say I admire him for it. There's something in its way quite noble and heroic in this sincerity he so prides himself on. It's a rare virtue nowadays. I only wish there were more people like him.

PHILINTE: Well, the more I see of him, the more amazed I am by this passion for Cédimène in which he is so deeply involved. I can't imagine what he thinks he's doing, given the sort of fellow he is, to go falling in love at all, still less how your cousin comes to be the one to take his fancy.



Scene ii.

ALCESTE, ÉLIANTE, PHILINTE

than my constancy can bear!

... My love... I don't know how to say it!

NOTE: Try to calm down a little.

to Smile

ÉLIANTE: But what can have —  
ALCESTE: It's the end of everything. I'm . . . I'm betrayed, and utterly

proof of her treachery could there be than to have, here in my pocket, a letter written in her own hand? Yes Madame, a letter written to

**your own business!**

ÉLIANTE: You should try to control yourself. The trouble —  
ALCESTE: Madame, the remedy lies with you. It's to you I turn

dedicating to you in ardent sacrifice my sincerest vows, my profoundest love, my devotion, my respect, and my unflinching duty.

ÉLIANTE: You may be sure I feel for you in your distress. I don't in the least undervalue the love you offer me. But it may be there's less harm done than you think and you may get over this urge for vengeance. When we suffer at the hands of the person we love, we make many a plan that we never carry out. However strong the reasons for breaking off relations may seem, they are often not strong enough. Guilt in the one we love soon turns to innocence again, resentment quickly vanishes: we all know what lovers' quarrels are!

ALCESTE: No, no Madame, not The injury's too deep. There's no going back. I'm breaking with her. Nothing can alter the decision I have made. I couldn't forgive myself if I ever loved her again. Here she is! My rage redoubles at the sight of her. I'll confront her in no uncertain terms with her villainy, confound her utterly, and then bring to you a heart entirely freed from her perfidious charms.

(Exit Philinte and Éliante.)

## Scene iii.

CÉLIMÈNE, ALCESTE

ALCESTE (aside): Oh, heavens! Can I keep a grip on my feelings now? sighs? What's this? Whatever's the matter with you? Why the sighs? What do these black looks mean?

ALCESTE: They mean that all the horrors of which the soul is capable are nothing in comparison with your disloyalty! That fate, hell, heaven in its wrath never produced a thing so vile as you!

CÉLIMÈNE: These are novel compliments, I must say! ALCESTE: Ah! Don't make light of it! This is no time for laughter. Far better blush, for you have good cause to! I have positive proof of your treachery. This is what was meant by my premonitions and it was not for nothing that I was alarmed. My frequent suspicions, which you found so odious, have brought me to the very misfortune that my eyes have now seen. Despite all your precautions and your cunning in deceit, my guiding star revealed to me what I had cause to fear! But don't assume that I shall suffer the humiliation of being

deceived and not seek my revenge! I know that our feelings are not ours to control, that love strikes where it will, that hearts cannot be won by force and that every soul is free to choose to its conqueror.

Nor should I have had any reason for complaint if you had spoken frankly: if you had rejected my addresses from the start, I should have had no quarrel save with fate. But to flatter my hopes with a false assurance that you returned my feelings was an act of betrayal and perfidiousness for which no punishment could be too severe, and it justifies my giving free rein to my resentment. Yes, yes, after such behaviour you may fear the worst! I am no longer myself: I am consumed by anger! Under the impact of this deadly blow, my passion is no longer subject to the constraints of reason! I yield to the impulse of my righteous wrath. I am not answerable for what I may do!

CÉLIMÈNE: Why are you raving like this? Tell me, have you taken leave of your senses?

ALCESTE: Yes, yes indeed! I took leave of them the moment I first set eyes on you and had the misfortune to drink the poison that now destroys me, when I thought to find sincerity in those treacherous charms which cast their spell upon me!

CÉLIMÈNE: What treachery have you to complain of?

ALCESTE: Ah! The duplicity! How skilled her heart is in pretence! But I have the means at hand to bring it to the test. Cast your eyes on this and admit to your own writing! This letter coming to light is all that is needed to expose your deceit. And against this evidence, there is no reply.

CÉLIMÈNE: So this is what's troubling you?

ALCESTE: Don't you blush at the sight of this document?

ALCESTE: Why should I blush?

ALCESTE: What! You have the audacity to persist in your deceit? Do you intend to disown it because it is not signed?

CÉLIMÈNE: Why should I disown a letter in my own handwriting? me? The whole tone of the letter convicts you!

ALCESTE: Can you look upon it and not blush for the wrong it does me?

CÉLIMÈNE: You are, truly, a strange and foolish man! ALCESTE: What! You still persist in the face of this overwhelming evidence? Isn't this revelation of your feelings for Oronte sufficient reason for my anger and your shame?

CÉLIMÈNE: Oronte? Who said the letter was meant for him?

ALCESTE: The people who placed it in my hands today. But supposing I were willing to grant it might have been meant for someone else, should I have any less reason to complain? Would it genuinely make you less guilty towards me?

CÉLIMÈNE: But if the letter were addressed to a woman, what harm would it do you? What would there be wrong in that?

ALCESTE: Ah! That's a clever ploy! An admirable excuse! I confess, I was not expecting it! And naturally, I'm totally convinced! How dare you resort to such a shabby trick! Do you think people have no sense at all? But do go on! Let's see what other wiles and stratagems you'll use to sustain so palpable a lie, how you'll manage to make out that so passionate a letter could be from one woman to another. Reconcile — if you are to cover up your faithlessness — what I am about to read with — *BEFORE TO READ THE LETTER*

CÉLIMÈNE: No, indeed I won't. I consider it ridiculous of you to presume to such authority and to dare say such things to my face!

ALCESTE: Now now. Don't fly into a temper! Just take a moment to try and explain what these words mean.

CÉLIMÈNE: No, I'll do no such thing. You can think what you like about it. It matters little to me.

ALCESTE: Show me, I beg you, that such a letter could really be intended for a woman and I'll be satisfied.

CÉLIMÈNE: No, it was written to Oronte. I'd rather you thought that.

I delight in his attentions, enjoy his conversation, admire his qualities — I'll agree to say anything you want. Go on, carry on with this quarrel, don't let anything stop you . . . as long as you don't pester me with it any more.

ALCESTE (*aside*): Heavens! Could there ever be anything so cruel? Was any man in love ever treated like this? Why! Here am I with every justification for being furious with her — I'm the one making the complaint and yet it's me who's getting the blame! She drives me to the limits of despair and suspicion, leaves me to believe the worst — and glories in it! And yet I still haven't the strength of mind to bring myself to break the chains that bind me to her, to steel my heart to show my proud contempt for this unworthy object of my too fond desires! (*To Célimène*) Perfidious creature! How well you know how to turn my weaknesses against me and exploit to your own advantage the fatal and excessive love those faithless eyes inspire! At least deny

a crime which is more than I can bear! Stop pretending that you are guilty! Prove to me, if you can, that the letter is innocent! My love will lend a helping hand. Try to seem true to me in this and I in turn shall try to believe that you are.

CÉLIMÈNE: No, no! You are mad when you are in these jealous fits and don't deserve the love I have for you. What, I should like to know, what could make me stoop to the baseness of deceiving you? Why, if my affections were indeed given to another, should I not tell you so frankly? Doesn't the fact that I choose to reassure you of what I feel for you protect me against your suspicions? How can those suspicions carry any force at all after you have been given such assurances? Is it not an insult to me that you still give credence to them? And when a woman's heart goes to the extreme of admitting that she's in love, and when the honour of our sex, ever at war with our passions, is so strongly opposed to such admissions, how can a lover, who sees us clamber over this obstacle for his sake, doubt so solemn an assurance with impunity? Isn't he to blame if he's not satisfied with what a woman can only express at all after a great inward struggle? No! Such suspicions warrant my anger! You aren't worthy of the consideration I have shown you! I'm a fool! I'm cross with myself for being so naïve as to go on being fond of you. I ought to bestow my affections elsewhere and give you proper grounds for complaining.

ALCESTE: Ah, the duplicity of it! Strange indeed is my weakness for you! You are certainly deceiving me with your honeyed words but no matter, I must accept my destiny! My very soul is committed to your love. I must see to the very end what that love is made of and whether you will really be so base as to betray me.

CÉLIMÈNE: Oh no, you don't love me as you should.

ALCESTE: Ah! My love is extreme and beyond all comparison! Such is my desire to make it manifest to all the world that I could even wish misfortune might befall you — yes, I would wish that no man should find you attractive, I would have you reduced to misery or born with nothing, without rank or birth or fortune so that I might in one resounding act of loving sacrifice repair the injustice of your fate and experience the joy and satisfaction of knowing that today you owed everything to my love.

CÉLIMÈNE: A strange way of showing how much you care for me!

Heaven grant you may have no such opportunity! But here comes your man, Du Bois – and most oddly dressed.

## Scene iv:

DU BOIS, CÉLIMÈNE, ALCESTE

ALCESTE: What's the meaning of that get-up? Why are you looking so alarmed? What's the matter? *to inquire*

DU BOIS: Sir ...

ALCESTE: Well?

DU BOIS: A lot of strange goings-on.

ALCESTE: What is it?

DU BOIS: Our affairs are in a sorry state sir.

ALCESTE: What do you mean?

DU BOIS: Can I say it out loud?

ALCESTE: Yes, and get on with it.

DU BOIS: Is there anybody about who –

ALCESTE: Stop beating about the bush! Spit it out man. *to get his meaning*

DU BOIS: Sir, we've got to beat a retreat.

ALCESTE: What?

DU BOIS: We must decamp – and no one must know.

ALCESTE: Why?

DU BOIS: I tell you we must get out of here. *to interlude*

ALCESTE: What for?

DU BOIS: We've got to go sir, and no time for farewells.

ALCESTE: Why are you talking like this?

DU BOIS: Why sir? Because we must pack up and be off.

ALCESTE: Ah! Explain what you mean you oaf, or I'll warm your ears for you.

DU BOIS: Sir, a man with a face as black as his coat walked right into the kitchen and left us this paper – a paper so scrawled over that you'd have to be as fly as the devil himself to read it. It's to do with your lawsuit, I shouldn't doubt, but Old Nick himself couldn't make head nor tail of it.

ALCESTE: Very well then you clod, what has the paper to do with what you were saying about going away? *to clarify*

DU BOIS: That's what I'm here to tell you sir. An hour later a gentleman

that often comes to see you arrives and asks for you urgent like, and not finding you at home, orders me, on the quiet, to tell you ... knowing as how that I am your faithful servant, to tell you that ... now wait a minute, what was his name?

ALCESTE: Never mind his name you dog, just tell me what he said. *to dismiss*

DU BOIS: He's a friend of yours, anyway sir, we'll leave it at that. He told me that you are in danger here and like to be arrested if you hang around.

ALCESTE: But why? Did he give no reason? *to investigate*  
DU BOIS: No, he just asks me for ink and paper and writes you a letter. I don't doubt it'll tell you all you're wanting to know.

ALCESTE: Hand it over, then! *to demand*

CÉLIMÈNE: What's behind all this?

ALCESTE: I don't know but I mean to find out. (*To Du Bois*.) Have you got it yet, you blundering oaf? *to harm*

DU BOIS (*after a long search*): Blow me sir, I've left it on your desk.

ALCESTE: I don't know what's stopping me from –

CÉLIMÈNE: Don't lose your temper. Go and find out what all this means.

ALCESTE (*going*): Try as I may, it seems the fates conspire to prevent me from having a conversation with you. But to ensure that they will not prevail, Madame, will you allow me to see you again before the day is out? *to redeem*

## Act V

## Scene I:

ALCESTE, PHILINTE

ALCESTE: I tell you, my mind's made up. *Don't argue with me*PHILINTE: But however serious this blow may be, do you really need to ... *to silence*

ALCESTE: No, you can talk and argue as much as you like, nothing will make me go back on what I have said. There's too much baseness in the world today. I'm determined to have nothing more to do with mankind. Why! Honour, integrity, decency, the law itself were all

to ... *to make my point*  
ALCESTE: No, you can talk and argue as much as you like, nothing will make me go back on what I have said. There's too much baseness in the world today. I'm determined to have nothing more to do with mankind. Why! Honour, integrity, decency, the law itself were all

against my opponent, the justice of my cause was acknowledged on all sides, I was confident I was in the right, and yet I have been wronged by the verdict. Justice was on my side, but I lost my case! Thanks to the blackest of lies, <sup>to silence</sup> ~~arrogant~~ whose scandalous past is notorious, emerges triumphant! <sup>to rebuke</sup> Honesty is made to yield to his duplicity. He cuts my throat and yet he ends up by being fully vindicated! He puts on a front of sheer hypocrisy through which shines the most palpable fraud, right is <sup>to indignant</sup> ~~overthrown~~ and justice perverted! Then to crown his villainy, he obtains a writ against me, and, not content with the wrong thus done me, there's an abominable book in circulation, a work it's criminal even to read, one for which no punishment could be too severe, and the scoundrel has the audacity to attribute the authorship to me! And on top of all that, I hear that Oronte has been going round whispering against me and spitefully lending support to the rumour - yes, Oronte, who has a reputation at Court for being an honourable man, whom I've always treated with frankness and sincerity. Yet he must come all eager and insistent and pester me against my will for an opinion on his verses, and because I treat him honestly and will neither lie to him nor betray the truth, he joins in accusing me of a crime I haven't committed! Now he's become my bitterest enemy! He'll never forgive me in his heart for not liking his sonnet. That's human nature for you, by God! That's what vanity leads men to! That's the measure of their good faith, their love of virtue, the sort of honour and justice that you find among them! No, no! The trouble they're making for me is more than I can stand. <sup>to the world</sup> ~~Let's flee this jungle, this cut-throat world!~~ Since you live together like wolves, you shall never include me among your number as long as I live! <sup>to the world</sup> ~~OK, OK, OK!~~

PHILINTE: I think the course of action you propose rather too hasty. Things aren't as bad as you make out. The accusations your opponent has made against you haven't gained sufficient credence to lead to your arrest. The falsity of his story is self-evident and his actions may yet rebound on him.

ALCESTE: On him? He's not afraid of any scandal his duplicity might bring! He's a licensed scoundrel. Far from his reputation suffering from this affair, you'll see that tomorrow it will stand higher than before.

PHILINTE: Nevertheless, the fact remains that people have attached little importance to the malicious rumours he's been spreading about you. So far you have nothing to fear on that score. As for your lawsuit of which you have good cause for complaint, you can easily appeal against the outcome and -

ALCESTE: No, I intend to abide by it. The verdict may have done me a glaring wrong, but I have no intention of wanting to have it quashed. It shows all too plainly how right may be abused. I want it to go down to posterity as a notorious instance, a notable testimony, of the wickedness of our generation. It may cost me twenty thousand francs, but those twenty thousand francs will give me the right to denounce the inquiry of human nature and cherish an undying hatred for it.

PHILINTE: Come now ...

ALCESTE: Come now, your concern is not needed! What can you possibly find to say to me on this subject? Will you even have the audacity to justify to my face the dreadful things that have happened?

PHILINTE: On the contrary, I'll agree to anything you like. The world is governed by intrigue and self-interest, and it's sharp practice these days that wins every time. Men ought to be different from what they are. But is their disregard for justice a reason for withdrawing from their society? The failings of human nature in this life give us opportunities for exercising our philosophy, which is the best use we can put our virtues to. If all men were righteous, all hearts true and frank and loyal, what purpose would most of our virtues serve? Their usefulness lies in enabling us to stay calm and bear the injustices others inflict upon us when we are in the right. And in the same way that a noble mind -

ALCESTE: Sir, I know that you are a fine talker and never at a loss for an argument. But your eloquent words are a waste of breath. Reason requires me to retire from the world for my own good. I do not have sufficient control of my tongue. I can't answer for what I may say. I might make no end of trouble for myself. Don't say any more, just leave me to wait for Célimène. I need her to agree to what I intend to do. Now I shall see if she really loves me. This is the moment that will put my doubts to the test.

PHILINTE: Let us go up to Éliante's room and wait for her there.

EXPLORE ROOM TURN ON S&D MUSIC

ALCESTE: No, I've got too much on my mind. You go and see her and leave me to this dark corner and my gloomy thoughts.  
 PHILINTE: That's strange company for you! I'll go and persuade Éliante to come down here. (He leaves.)

MUSIC  
 ORONTE, CÉLIMÈNE, ALCESTE

Scene II:

ORONTE: Yes Madame, it's for you to decide now whether you wish to tie the knot that will make me entirely yours. I must have absolute assurance of your love. This is not an issue on which a lover can bear to be kept in uncertainty. If the ardour of my passion has moved you, you should not hesitate to tell me. After all, the proof I now ask is no more than that you permit Alceste's attentions no longer, that you sacrifice him to my love, and, in short Madame, that you banish him from your house this very day.

CÉLIMÈNE: But what terrible thing is it that has turned you so much against him? I have often heard you speak highly of his qualities.  
 ORONTE: There's no need to go into that Madame. The question is: what are your feelings? Please, make your choice. Take one or other of us. I am in your hands.

ALCESTE (emerging from his corner): Yes Madame, this gentleman is right. You must make your choice. His request accords with my own wishes. I am moved by the same impatience and the same concern. My passion also requires an unequivocal sign from yours. Things can't go on any longer as they are. The time has come for you to say what you have decided.

ORONTE: I have no wish to ruffle your happiness in any way, sir, by allowing my own passion to intrude...

ALCESTE: Nor have I the least desire, sir, call it jealousy or what you will, to share her affections with you.

ORONTE: If she feels that your love is preferable to mine...

ALCESTE: If she's capable of the slightest regard for you...

ORONTE: I swear I'll never see her again.

ALCESTE: Madame, it's for you to speak freely.

ALCESTE: Madame, you need not fear to say where you stand.

ORONTE: All you need do is to tell us where your affections lie.

ALCESTE: All you need do is to make up your mind and choose between us.

ORONTE: What! Can you really find it difficult to make a choice between the alternatives?

ALCESTE: What! Are you wavering? Can you be in any doubt?

CÉLIMÈNE: Heavens! Your insistence is quite inappropriate! How unreasonable you both are! I'm quite capable of making up my mind.

It's not my heart that hesitates: I'm in no doubt - there's nothing simpler than making a choice. But what I do find very awkward, I must admit, is having to state my preference to you personally. I feel that one should not have to say such disagreeable things in the presence of the people concerned. One can give sufficient indication of one's preference without being forced to throw it in a person's face. Some gentler form of intimation should be enough to convey to a lover the failure of his attentions.

ORONTE: No, no! I have nothing to fear from a frank statement. There's no objection on my part.

ALCESTE: And I demand it! I insist on its being made openly, here and now. I have no wish to see you soften the blow. You are always anxious to keep in with everybody. No more delay! No more uncertainty! You shall explain exactly where you stand. If you won't, then I shall take that to be your decision. I shall know, for my part, what interpretation to put upon your silence: I'll assume the worst.

ORONTE: I'm most grateful to you for putting it so strongly sir. I say to the lady the same thing that you have.

CÉLIMÈNE: How tiresome you are with these unreasonable demands! I ask you, is it fair to put such a question? Haven't I already explained the reason why I hold back? But here comes Éliante. I'll ask her to be the judge.

UP

STAIRS

TO PUSH

TO CORNER

TO PUSH

TO CORNER

TO PUSH

TO CORNER

TO PUSH

TO CORNER

TO PUSH

TO CORNER

TO PUSH

## Scene iii.

ÉLIANTE, PHILINTE, CÉLIMÈNE, ORONTE,  
ALCESTE

CÉLIMÈNE: Cousin, I'm being persecuted by these two gentlemen who seem to have joined forces against me. They both demand, with equal insistence, that I declare which of them has the prior place in my affections, and that I make an open pronouncement in their presence forbidding one or the other to pay his addresses to me in future. Tell me, did you ever hear of such a thing in all your life?

ÉLIANTE: Don't ask me about it! You may find you've come to the wrong person. I'm for people who speak their minds.

ORONTE: It's no use your refusing, Madame.

ALCESTE: Your evasions will get no support from her. To ~~that~~ <sup>that</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~other~~ <sup>other</sup> ~~side~~ <sup>side</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~argument~~ <sup>argument</sup> ~~for~~ <sup>for</sup> ~~me~~ <sup>me</sup>.

ORONTE: You really must say and come down on one side or the other.

ALCESTE: You need only continue to keep silent.

ORONTE: One single word will end the argument for me.

ALCESTE: And I shall understand if you say nothing at all.

## Scene iv.

ACASTE, CLITANDRE, ARSINOË, PHILINTE,  
ÉLIANTE, ORONTE, CÉLIMÈNE, ALCESTE

ACASTE: Madame, we've both come here to clear up a small matter with you, if you don't mind.

CLITANDRE (to Oronte and Alceste): It's most fortunate, gentlemen, that you should be here, since you are also involved in this business.

ARSINOË: You are surprised to see me Madame, but it's these gentlemen who are responsible for my being here. They came and complained to me about something I couldn't bring myself to credit. I have too high an opinion of your character to believe you could ever be guilty of such an appalling action. Refusing to believe the evidence they showed me, strong though it appeared to be, and overlooking our little disagreement in the interests of friendship, I agreed to accompany them here and see you clear yourself of this slander.

ACASTE: Yes Madame, let us see, coolly and calmly, how you will set

about defending yourself on this point. Did you write this letter to Clitandre?

CLITANDRE: Did you address this tender missive to Acaste?

ACASTE (Oronte and Alceste): This writing is not unknown to you gentlemen. The civilities she has extended to you have no doubt made the hand familiar. But this is worth the trouble of reading.

(Reads:) 'What a strange man you are to condemn me for my high spirits and accuse me of never being so happy as when I am not with you. Nothing could be more unfair, and unless you come soon and beg my pardon for your offence, I shall never forgive you so long as I live. That great booby, the viscount...' It's a pity he's not here!

'That great booby, the viscount, with whom you begin your complaints, isn't at all the sort of man to appeal to me. I have never thought much of him since the day I saw him spitting into a well, making rings in the water, for fully three-quarters of an hour. As for the little marquis...' That's me, gentlemen, not to flatter myself unduly...

'As for the little marquis who held my hand yesterday for an age, he's a person of no significance whatsoever, and as poor as younger sons usually are. As far as the man with the green ribbons...'

(To Alceste:) It's your turn now sir. 'As for the man with the green ribbons, he does sometimes amuse me with his bluntness and his churlish bad temper but there are many occasions when I find him the most tiresome man on earth. Then there's the man with the waistcoat...'

(To Oronte:) This is where you get it. 'Then there's the man with the waistcoat who has got the idea that he's a wit and is determined to be an author despite what anyone says. I just can't bring myself to listen to what he says. I find his prose as tedious as his verse, so do please get it into your head that I don't always enjoy myself as much as you think, that I miss you most dreadfully at all the functions I'm obliged to attend, and that being with someone we are fond of adds a wonderful relish to the pleasures we enjoy.'

CLITANDRE: And now for me. (Reads:) 'You mention your friend Clitandre who gets so mawkish, but he's the last man in the world I'd ever take a fancy to. He's quite mad to believe I'm in love with him; and you are as bad to believe that I don't love you. Be sensible, exchange opinions with him, come and see me as often as you can

and help me to put up with the misery of being pestered by him.  
(*To Célimène*.) A very fine pattern of virtue we have before us here, Madame. No doubt you know the name normally given to such persons. But enough! We'll all now go our various ways and hold up for all to see this splendid picture of you as you really are.

ACASTE: There's a great deal I could say to you — it's a subject rich in possibilities. But I don't think you're worth getting angry about. Instead I'll show you that little marquises can find consolations superior to anything you have to offer. (*Acaste and Cléandre leave.*)

ORONTE: To think that you could tear me to pieces like that after all you've written to me! And you offer the same specious promises of love to everyone in turn! Ah! I was fooled too easily, but it shan't happen again. You have done me a useful service in letting me see you as you really are. I am better off to the tune of one heart which you have now returned to me, and I have the satisfaction of knowing that the loss is entirely yours. (*To Alceste*.) Sir, I shall stand in the way of your love no longer. You may come to terms with the lady. (*He leaves.*)

ARSINOË: This really is the most disgraceful business I ever heard of! I just cannot remain silent, I am very shocked. Was there ever such behaviour as yours! I'm not concerned about the others, but did this gentleman whom you were fortunate enough to attract, a most honourable and worthy man who worshipped the very ground that you trod on, deserve to be —

ALCESTE: Madame, kindly leave me to look after my own affairs and don't meddle with what does not concern you. No purpose would be served by your taking up my quarrel. I'm in no position to repay your zeal on my behalf. You aren't the person my thoughts would turn to if I wanted to avenge myself by transferring my affections elsewhere.

ARSINOË: Oh! Do you imagine, sir, that I harboured any such idea? Why should I be so anxious to have you? You have too much vanity in your character, I think, if you entertain any such impression! This lady's cast-offs are a commodity which it would be wrong for any woman to want! Open your eyes, I beg you, and don't be so high and mighty! Women like me are not for the likes of you. Better go on pining for her. I should love to see so suitable a match. (*She leaves.*)

ALCESTE (*to Célimène*): Well, I have held my peace in spite of everything I've seen. I let them all have their say before me. Have I contained myself long enough? May I now ...

CÉLIMÈNE: Yes, you may say anything. You have a right to complain and I admit it. I'm too ashamed to put you off with lame excuses. The anger of the others I despised, but you I agree I have wronged. Your resentment is entirely justified. I know how guilty I must seem in your eyes, how everything points to my having betrayed you. You have indeed good reason to hate me. Well then, hate me. I consent.

ALCESTE: Ah! But can I, when you have deceived me so? Can I overcome all my feelings for you? Try as I may to hate you, can I find it in my heart to do so? (*To Éliante and Philinte*.) You see the power of object love! I call you both to witness my weakness. Yet to confess the truth, I do not intend to stop there: you shall observe me push my weakness to its furthest limit and show how wrong it is to call any of us wise and demonstrate that there's some touch of human frailty in every one of us. (*To Célimène*.) Yes, you betrayed me, yet I am prepared to forget what you did and shall find it in my heart to excuse your behaviour by attributing it to the waywardness into which the wickedness of the age has led you because you're young — provided you will agree to join me in my plan to flee all humankind and undertake to accompany me forthwith into the rustic solitude in which I have sworn to live. Thus, and only thus, can you make amends in people's minds for the harm done by your letters, and, after this scandal so abhorrent to a noble mind like mine, may I be allowed to go on loving you.

CÉLIMÈNE: What? Renounce the world before I'm old and bury myself in some rural wilderness!

ALCESTE: Ah! If only your love matched mine, what would the rest of the world matter? Can I not give you everything you want?

CÉLIMÈNE: Solitude is a frightening prospect when you are twenty. I don't feel I have the necessary fortitude or strength to bring myself to take such a decision. But if the offer of my hand would satisfy you, I could agree to tie the knot, and marriage —

ALCESTE: No! At this moment I hate you! Your refusal is far worse than the rest of what you have done. Since you can't bring yourself



to accept marriage and within it make me your everything as you  
~~TO REJECT~~ are everything to me, I reject your proposition. This ~~but~~ <sup>TO REJECT</sup> insult  
~~TO TAKE A GOOD~~ releases me from your ignoble fetters for ever. (*Exit Célimène. Alceste*  
~~turns to Eliante~~) Madame, your beauty is graced by countless virtues.  
 I have never known you to be anything but sincere. I have ~~long~~ <sup>TO REJECT</sup> held  
 you in the greatest esteem. Permit me to continue to do so, but  
 forgive me if, beset as I am with troubles, I do not aspire to the  
 honour of your hand. I feel myself unworthy of it and I begin to  
 realize that heaven did not intend me for ~~marriage~~ <sup>TO REJECT</sup> and that a heart  
 which another has refused would be too poor a tribute to offer you  
 ... and in fact —

ÉLIANTE: Please, go on thinking that if you wish. I have no worries  
 about where I might bestow my hand, and without needing to trouble  
 myself unduly, I think your friend here might contrive to accept it  
 if I asked him to.

PHILINTE: Ah, Madame! I could ask no greater honour. For that I  
 would sacrifice my life itself.

ALCESTE: May you ever continue to cherish such feelings for each other  
 and so come to know true contentment. Betrayed on all sides, with  
 injustice heaped upon me, I mean to escape from this abyss where  
 vice reigns triumphant and scour the world for some place so remote  
 that there a man might be free to live as honour bids. (*Exit.*) <sup>TO REJECT</sup>

PHILINTE: Come Madame, we must do all we can, to make him give  
 up this foolish plan.

# The Doctor Despite Himself

## A Comedy

Le Médecin malgré lui  
 Comédie

First performed on 6 August 1666 at the Théâtre du  
 Palais Royal by the King's Players

LOOK BACK  
 AT THEM TO  
 SAY SOMETHING  
 THEN REALIZE  
 THEY'RE EVIL

TO  
 PUSH  
 AWAY  
 TO  
 LIVE UP  
 COME TO LEAVE  
 GOVERN

## Misanthrope Cast and Crew List

### CAST

Alceste:	David Brown
Philinte:	John Charles II
Oronte:	Eduardo Sanchez
Celimene:	Sarah Elizabeth James
Eliante:	Ashton Akridge
Arsinoe:	Meghan Shea
Acaste:	Mitchell Courville
Clitandre:	Khali Freeman
Basque:	Gerardo Hidalgo
Du Bois/Officer:	Evan Eyer

### PRODUCTION

Director:	David W. Hoover
Stage Manager:	Joni Bankston
Set design:	Kevin Griffith
Light/sound design:	Diane Baas
Costumes:	Anthony French
Props:	Ashton Akridge
Set Design:	Matthew Eberts
Set Design:	Mackenzie Franco.
Soundboard:	Errine Lester,
Light board:	Sidhant Mahat.

## Rehearsal Schedule

March 7: First Read

March 12: Table Read

March 13: Off

March 14: 1:00 – Act II, scene iv; Act IV scenes i, ii, iii  
2:00 – Add Du Bois, Act IV scene iv

March 15: Off

March 16: 7:00 – Act III, scenes iv, v  
7:30 – add Act V, scenes i, ii, iii, iv

March 17: 7:00 – Act V, scenes i, ii, iii

March 18: 7:00 – Act III, scenes i, ii, iii

August 15: 1:00 – Read Through Again

August 16: Off

August 17: Off

August 18: 7:00 – Block/Work Act I, scenes i, ii, iii

August 19: 7:00 – Block/Work Act II, scenes iv, v, vi  
8:30 – Block/Work Act II, scenes i, ii, iii

August 20: 7:00 – Block/Work Act III, scenes i, ii, iii

August 21: 7:00 – Block/Work Act III, scenes iv, v

August 22: 1:00 – Work through Acts I, II, III

August 23: Off

August 24: 7:00 – Block/Work Act IV, scenes i, ii, iii, iv

August 25: 7:00 – Block/Work Act V, scene i  
               7:30 – Add Act V, scene ii  
               8:00 – Pick Up Act I, scene ii with Oronte  
 August 26: 7:00 – Block/Work Act V, scenes iii, iv  
 August 27: Off  
 August 28: 7:00 – Work through Act IV and V  
               7:30 – Add Du Bois  
               8:00 – Add Acaste, Clitandre, Arsinoe, and Oronte  
 August 29: 1:00 – Run Entire Play  
 August 30: Off  
 August 31: 7:00 – Run Act I  
               7:30 – Work Act II, scenes i, ii, iii  
               8:00 – Add Act II, scenes iv, v, vi  
               8:30 – Run Act II  
 September 1: Off  
 September 2: Off Book  
               7:00 – Work through Act III, scene i  
               7:30 – Add Celimene, Act III, scene ii  
               8:00 – Add Basque, Act III, scene iii  
               8:30 – Add Arsinoe, Act III, scene iv  
               9:00 – Add Alceste, Act III, scene v  
               9:30 – Run Act III  
 September 3: 7:00 – Work through Act IV, scene i

7:30 – Add Alceste, Act IV, scene ii

7:45 – Add Celimene, Act IV, scene iii

8:00 – Add Du Bois, Act IV, scene iv

8:30 – Run Act IV

September 4: 7:00 – Work through Act V, scene i

7:30 – Add Oronte and Celimene, Act V, scene ii

8:00 – Add Elinete, Act V, scene iii

8:30 – Add Arsinoe, Clitandre, Acaste, Act V, scene iv

9:00 – Run Act V

September 5: 1:00 – Run Entire Play

September 6: Off

September 7: 10:00 – Call for 10:30 Run

September 8: 7:00 – Run Through

September 9: 7:00 – Run Through

September 10: 7:00 – Run Through

September 11: Off

September 12: 10:00 to 10:00 – Wet Cue to Cue, Tech Run

September 13: 1:30 – Tech Run

September 14: 6:30 – Dress Rehearsal

September 15: 6:30 – Dress Rehearsal

September 16: 6:30 – Dress Rehearsal

September 17: Opening Night

September 18: Performance

September 19: Performance

September 24: Performance

September 25: 9:30 Student Matinee

Performance

September 26: Performance

September 27: 2:00 – Sunday Matinee

5:00 - Strike

## **Works Cited Page**

- Adler, Stella. *The Technique of Acting*. New York: Bantam Books, 1988. Print.
- Bellinger, Martha Fletcher. *A Short History of the Drama*. New York: Henry Holt & Company. 1927. Print
- Blum, Richard A. *American Film Acting The Stanislavski Heritage*. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1984. Print.
- Brook, Peter. *Empty Space*. New York: Simon and Schuster. 1968. Print
- Edwards, Christine. *The Stanislavski Heritage*. New York: NYU Press, 1965. Print.
- May, Rollo. *Courage to Create*. New York: Norton Printing. 1976. Print
- Moore, Sonia. *Stanislavski Revealed*. New York: Applause Theatre Books, 1998. Print.
- Nemirovich-Danchenko, Vladimir. *My Life in the Russian Theatre*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1936. Print
- Scott, Virginia. *Moliere: A Theatrical Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2000. Print
- Shurtleff, Michael. *Audition*. New York: Walker & Company. 1978. Print
- Stanislavski, Constantin. *An Actor Prepares*. New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1952. Print.
- Stanislavski, Constantin. *Creating a Role*. New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1968. Print.
- Stanislavski, Constantin. *My Life in Art*. New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1948. Print.
- Stanislavski, Constantin. *Stanislavski's Legacy*. New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1958. Print.
- Taylor, Hobart Chatfield. *Moliere: A Biography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1906. Print.

## **Vita**

The author was born in Chelmsford, MA in 1983. He was raised in Highland, UT. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Brigham Young University in 2007, majoring in Korean and minoring in psychology. He began his work toward a Master of Fine Arts degree at the University of New Orleans in the fall of 2013. He has appeared at UNO in *Parsifal Worthy* (Jessica Madoff, director), *Father* (Jennifer Billot, director), *To Kill a Mockingbird* (David W. Hoover, director), *Hamlet* (Jim Winters, director), *A Melancholy Play* (Jay Hammond, director) and *The Misanthrope* (David W. Hoover, director). He is married to Emily Brown and has 4 children, Daniel, Maggie, Noah, and Dayton.