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More Than a Pretty Face: An Exploration of Célimène in Molière's The Misanthrope

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More Than a Pretty Face: An Exploration of Célimène in Molière'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
Theatre Performance

by

Sarah Elizabeth James

B.A. Mississippi State University, 2013

May 2016

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Faith

We are nothing without faith, hope, and love. The amount of love that I encountered throughout this entire process instilled me with hope and encouragement. With that, it is my faith, ultimately, that I lean on the most. I give full acknowledgment to the Lord for any and all successes, and lean on my faith for those areas that call for improvement. I am thankful for my faith in guiding me through this process, from sleepless nights, to celebrations, to prayers whispered backstage.

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I am blessed with two parents, Faye and David, who support me with endless energy and enthusiasm. In a run of seven shows, they were each in the audience three nights. I am continuously amazed by their love, their support, and their open-mindedness. I am forever grateful for the drive they have instilled in me to aim high in my ambitions and for the confidence they continue to foster in pushing me to reach those goals.

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Moreover, I have incredible friends. Kalin, Chelsea, and Alex have endless amounts of patience when it comes to my availability, and I am grateful for their understanding and support. The knowledge that I can count on them for an ear, an idea, or a glass of wine gave me comfort and peace throughout this journey.

From running lines, to listening patiently to endless rants about character development and rehearsals, to leaving dinner for me in the refrigerator, to running more lines, to helping me

unwind after 14 hour workdays, to feeding Leo, to running more lines, to feeding me, to running more lines, to unpredictable meltdowns, to attending shows, to running lines so many times that he has memorized the script, I am infinitely grateful to Devin Hodo for seeing me through this process by keeping me sane and fed. Devin is my time when I don't have any, my presence when I'm not available, my chef when I forget to eat, my getaway when I need it, and my mind when I'm losing it.

Cast and Crew

This production was successful and exciting because of an outstanding cast and crew. I am grateful to the director, David Hoover, for providing an environment of play and exploration and for pushing me to dig into my weaknesses rather than cover them up. I am grateful for the focus and energy he invested into making this production the best it could be in each and every rehearsal.

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Graduate Committee

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motivate me to excel in all facets of the craft, to deny satisfaction, and to look beyond my full potential.

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DEDICATION

To each of the aforementioned, as this entire experience would not have been as it was without you. Thank you.

To Leo, my heart and soul.

To the Célimène's of past, present, and future:
May your journey take you somewhere new, and may you find the same personal inspiration along the way.

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ABSTRACT

Molière's *The Misanthrope* explores themes of hypocrisy, love, and the elusive nature of the truth. The play centers on the effects of unapologetic honesty in a society overflowing with pretense.

Célimène serves as the supreme example of this society but is more complicated than the shallow follies she represents. She walks the tightrope between truth and survival and must keep the balance without leaning too heavily one way or the other – lest she fall.

This thesis endeavors to articulate the creation of a multi-dimensional character that connects with today's audience and facilitates an understanding of the intentions and motivations behind her actions as well as the influence of this particular society on its members.

This endeavor includes biographical information on Molière, a breakdown of the author's process, inspirations for this process, a character analysis of Célimène, rehearsal manuscripts, and an analytical reflection of the resulting attempt to walk the line.

Keywords: Célimène, Misanthrope, Performance, Acting, Character, Play

INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 2015, the University of New Orleans produced *The Misanthrope*, a comedy written by the French playwright, Molière. The production was staged in the Robert E. Nims Thrust Theatre and ran for two weekends beginning on Thursday, September 17, 2015 (a total of eight performances). The performances included a student matinee on Friday, September 25 and closed with a Sunday matinee on September 27.

The University of New Orleans's production of *The Misanthrope* was directed by David W. Hoover, Chair of the University of New Orleans Department of Film and Theatre and Director of the Master of Fine Arts Performance Program. A full list of the cast and crew can be found in Appendix I: Production Resources.

Sarah Elizabeth James's performance as Célimène in this production of *The Misanthrope* will serve to meet the partial requirements necessary to acquire a Master of Fine Arts in Film and Theatre Performance from the University of New Orleans.

This thesis is a compilation of research, documentation, and analysis detailing the course of preparation, creation, performance, and reflection for this production. The following aims to articulate the journey of developing a full character in Célimène and the process of building a clear and complete experience for each audience night after night.

CHAPTER 1

Who the Deuce is Jean Baptiste de Poquelin?

**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.**

The Misanthrope, Act I scene ii

BIOGRAPHY: JEAN BAPTISTE DE POQUELIN

As the stories of the theatre often go, Molière's is one of challenge, disappointment, and untimely death. Surrounded in time by the lives and careers of Pierre Corneille and Jean Racine, much of his life is clouded in obscurity. He endured poverty, loss, betrayal, unhappiness, and shame, although one might not know it from his works alone.

Early Life

Little detail is known about the early years of Jean Baptiste de Poquelin, who would later become known as Molière. Poquelin was born on January 15, 1622 in Paris, France. His father, Jean Poquelin, built and sold furniture and served as an upholsterer for King Louis XIII.¹ At the time, his father was known as a *tapissier*, known today as an interior designer – he supplied tapestries, furnishings, upholsteries, and “magnificent matrimonial beds” to the wealthy. His mother was Marie Cressé, and both of his parents were members of the middle class at the time of his birth.²

Education

Poquelin spent the first part of his education at Collège de Clermont, a Jesuit school in Paris, where he became highly skilled in languages, including Greek and Latin.¹ It is thought that Poquelin encountered a number of Latin, Spanish, and Italian comedies while in school.³

After studying at Collège de Clermont, he went on to obtain his civil law degree in 1642 from the University of Orléans.² Despite his educational background and an aptitude for his

¹ Bermel, Albert. “Molière – French Dramatist.” *Discover France*. The Wharton Group, 1997. Web. 15 October 2015.

² Sumption, Christine. “Molière's Life.” *Shakespeare Theatre*. Shakespeare Theatre Company. Web. 15 October 2015.

³ Bellinger, Martha Fletcher. “Molière (Jean Baptiste De Poquelin, 1621 – 1673).” *A Short History of the Drama*. Henry Holt & Company, 1927. Web. 16 October 2015.

father's trade, however, Poquelin would neither practice law nor join the family business,¹ much to his parents' disappointment.

Career

In 1643, Poquelin founded The Illustre Theatre (L'Illustre Théâtre) – his first acting troupe.⁴ He worked in conjunction with the Bejart family, and it is believed that his motivation for this collaboration was his love for Madeleine Bejart, the oldest daughter of the family.¹ Madeleine and her brothers were members of the company, and Poquelin served as actor and manager.⁴ Madeleine would eventually become Poquelin's mistress during this time – “an independent, redheaded woman several years older than him.”¹

It is also believed that it was during this time, at the age of 21, that Poquelin would lose his family name to take on his stage name, Molière, by which he would become famous. Pseudonyms were quite common in France at this time. Some believe that Poquelin adopted his new name to avoid tainting his family's name.⁴

The Illustre Theatre survived for about 18 months and then collapsed in debt. The company was also being attacked by The Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement, a religious organization that discouraged its members from supporting The Illustre Theatre and attending performances. As the president of the company, Molière served a short time in debtors' prison when the project failed.²

This initial demise did not dishearten Molière from continuing to pursue a life in the theatre. Out of prison, he fled Paris with Madeleine and joined a touring troupe of actors in 1645.⁵ Molière and Madeleine toured the French provinces until 1658 and eventually became managers of the company. During this time, Molière was able to hone his skills as an actor and

⁴ Bertrin, Georges. “Jean-Baptiste Poquelin Molière.” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 10. Robert Appleton Company, 1911. Web. 16 October 2015.

⁵ Paran, Janice. “Molière Biography.” *McCarter Theatre*. McCarter Theatre. Web. 15 October 2015.

playwright.² He was largely influenced by the varying troupes and works he encountered through his travels, particularly the Italian commedia dell'arte. It was through these adventures that Molière sharpened his talent for comedy and farce, both as an actor and writer, although he ached for triumphs in tragedy.⁵ Only a few of his comedies written during this time remain: *La Jalousie de Barbouill*, *Le Médecin Volant*, *L'Etourdi*, and *Le Dépit Amoureux*.⁴

The company, under the management of Molière, was invited to return to Paris to perform for King Louis XIV. Louis XIV's brother was a patron of the company, and Madeleine had been acquiring funding for a sublease with the Théâtre du Marais² so the two were returned to Paris in much better condition than they had left nearly 13 years earlier. The company quickly earned the king's approval with Molière's *Docteur Amoureux*.³ This favor won them usage of the Petit Bourbon, a theatre of the court, and later the Palais-Royal for court entertainment.⁵ Molière and his troupe had become official entertainers for King Louis XIV and his court.

Molière's career as a playwright began to rise with *Les Précieuses Ridicules* (*The Pretentious Young Ladies* or *The Affected Ladies*), which was produced in 1659 and was inspired by the ladies he encountered upon his return "whose chief aim in life was to promote culture."³ This piece is said to be the turning point in Molière's writing, because he was beginning to find his niche as a contemporary writer observing the follies of the present day.

Madame de Rambouillet was dead, but the literary cult which she had established was still very much the fashion. Molière seized upon the affected speech, the elegant gallantries and the learned sentimentality of the précieuses and caricatured them with infinite skill. Even the blue-stockings and the gallants were obliged to laugh at themselves.³

Molière was essentially declaring war on the society in which he lived, and the war would last for the rest of his life. Naturally, his observations made him a few enemies, from clergymen to

rivaling playwrights – many of whom he characterized in his work. Molière would develop a habit of upsetting important people over the next 14 years.

Family

Molière did not wed his traveling mistress and fellow actress, Madeleine Bejart. Instead, he married Armande Bejart in 1662. Armande is believed to be Madeleine's younger sister, although some of those rivaling playwrights say she was actually Madeleine's daughter – only 19 years old when she married Molière, who was 40. Armande would become a leading actress in Molière's company.

In 1665, Armande gave birth to their only child to survive infancy, Esprit-Madeleine. Molière and Armande separated and reunited several times over the course of their marriage.¹ Several of Molière's works such as *The Versailles Impromptu* indicate that their marriage was not a pleasant relationship.²

Works

After the success of *The Affected Ladies*, Molière would go on to write a number of highly acclaimed comedies, most of which reflected the farcical behavior he witnessed in society or the troubles of his life at home. From clergymen, to courtiers, to his wife, no one was immune.

In a society of artifice, Molière used the theatre to mock the affectations of his audience of socialites. While occasionally getting him into trouble, his satires earned him the reputation of one of the greatest comedians of all time.²

With a growing list of adversaries, Molière chose a theme of jealousy to inspire works including *The School for Husbands* in 1661, which became an enormous success. Other themes such as hypocrisy and infidelity inspired successes including *The School for Wives* (1662), *Tartuffe* (1664), and *The Misanthrope* (1666).² *The School for Wives* provided Armande's first starring role in the company.⁵

From 1664 to 1669, *Tartuffe*, which also held an unpleasant mirror up to society, was banned from public performance after its first production, despite protection from King Louis XIV. Many believed the play was an attack on religion. Molière was obliged to modify the play before it would be officially accepted again.

During the years of the ban, Molière composed *Don Juan* (1665), believed to be an attack in response to the censoring of *Tartuffe*. *Don Juan* was also repressed immediately after its first public performance. In spite of his controversial works, Molière and his troupe earned the title of La Troupe du Roi and received regular pensions from the king.⁵

Other works written during this time include *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* (1666), *The Miser* (1668), *Amphitryon* (1668), *The Bourgeois Gentleman* (1670), *Scapin* (1671), and *The Learned Ladies* (1672).

Later Years

Throughout the last decade of his life, Molière was riddled with health issues and domestic struggles. He was diagnosed with tuberculosis and suffered frequent coughing fits. Despite his illness, he continued to write, act, and manage his troupe for several years.¹

Molière collapsed on stage during a performance of *The Imaginary Invalid* on February 17, 1673. Ironically, the production featured Molière as a severe hypochondriac. Although theatrical myth holds that Molière died on stage, he actually passed away in his home several hours later.² The archbishop of Paris received petitions from Armande for his burial and reluctantly permitted her to have a private nighttime burial in the parish cemetery without ceremony or rites.⁵

Legacy

Molière is considered one of the greatest writers to represent the country of France. He carved out a unique style of comedy in which the truth served as the central theme. His characters are universally recognizable representatives of this truth – of humanity in its truest forms. During a time when plot twists and dramatic events dominated the theatrical scene, Molière created characters who could carry the weight of the audience's investment. Molière, above all, was a highly skilled and observant caricaturist of humankind.

According to most critics, his style and structure are not perfect. This is forgiven, however, because of his ability to combine verse with a colloquial, comedic language, similar to improvisation – which he was often forced to do on a short deadline. His language and style are enhanced by his aptitude with reason and logic.⁴

Nearly all of Molière's work was done with too much haste. He 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[s] he portrayed, to his brilliancy of wit, and to the resourcefulness of his technique.³

COMPLETE WORKS²

- The Jealous Husband (1645)
- The Flying Doctor (1648)
- The Scatterbrain (1653)
- A Lovers' Quarrel (1656)
- The Affected Ladies (1659)
- The Imaginary Cuckold (1660)
- The Jealous Prince (1661)
- The School for Husbands (1661)
- The Nuisances (1661)
- The School for Wives (1662)
- The School for Wives Criticized (1663)
- A Versailles Improvisation (1663)
- The Forced Wedding (1664)
- The Princess of Elida (1664)
- Tartuffe (1664, 1667, 1669)
- Don Juan (1665)
- Love's Cure-All (1665)
- The Misanthrope (1666)
- The Doctor in Spite of Himself (1666)
- Mélicerte (1666)
- A Comic Pastoral (1667)
- The Sicilian (1667)
- Amphytrion (1668)
- The Confounded Husband (1668)
- The Miser (1668)
- Monsieur de Pourceaugnac (1669)
- The Magnificent Suitors (1670)
- The Bourgeois Gentleman (1670)
- Psyche (1671)
- Scapin's Schemings (1671)
- A Pretentious Countess (1671)
- The Learned Ladies (1672)
- The Imaginary Invalid (1673)

CHAPTER 2

Le Misanthrope

**Dear me! Do you think I worry about the number of admirers you
so pride yourself on?**

The Misanthrope, Act III scene iv

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Originally produced in Paris on June 4, 1666, *The Misanthrope* has earned its place as a staple piece in the history of comedy. In the original production, its author played the part of Alceste, the misanthrope, whose character was unprecedented on the stage at that time.

The Misanthrope, touching on themes including hypocrisy, dishonesty, disloyalty, and societal pretenses for personal gain, is a fitting demonstration of Molière's ability to expose the absurdities of his world through poetry and satire. Molière's close companion, Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, considered this comedy of manners to be his friend's ultimate masterpiece.⁶

The Misanthrope has undergone a wide variety of translations and adaptations over the centuries. The comedy has been performed in countless professional and academic theatres, as well as on radio and television.⁷

The play made its Broadway debut on April 10, 1905 at New Amsterdam Theatre, where it enjoyed a total of eight performances. Other notable appearances include five performances at the Winter Garden Theatre in 1957, 86 performances at Lyceum Theatre in 1968, and 69 performances at the Circle in the Square Theatre on Broadway in 1983.⁸

The role of Célimène has been played by numerous actresses including Madeleine Renaud (1957), Christina Pickles (1968), and Mary Beth Hurt (1983).⁸ More recently, the role was played by Uma Thurman in an adaptation at the Classic Stage Company in 1999.⁹

Here, cast against the finely seasoned English actor Roger Rees in the title role and forced to speak in intricate, rhymed couplets, she [Uma Thurman] brings to mind a beautiful, sheltered girl at her first grown-up dance, putting on airs and hoping against hope she'll get away with it.⁹

⁶ Bates, Alfred. "The Misanthrope." *The Drama: Its History, Literature and Influence on Civilization*. Vol. 7. Historical Publishing Company, 1906. Web. 15 October 2015.

⁷ Wilbur, Richard. *Molière The Misanthrope and Tartuffe*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 1993. Print.

⁸ *Internet Broadway Database*. The Broadway League, 2001. Web. 17 October 2015.

⁹ Brantley, Ben. "Theatre Review: Molière's Savages Lose Out to Today's." *The New York Times*. The New York Times Company, 15 February 1999. Web. 17 October 2015.

RECEPTION

The original production of *The Misanthrope* was well-received, and since then the piece has enjoyed positive feedback. While Molière is sometimes criticized for his structure and for neglecting the technical aspects of his style, he is more often praised for his ability to point the finger at human nature without arrogance or apology. *The Misanthrope*, through Alceste and his interactions with other heightened characters, manages to do just this.

Reviews

“A wonderful blend of deceptively clever word play and brazenly awful punnery...tremendously enjoyable.”
– **What’s On Stage**¹⁰

“Full of the legendary McGough wit and excellently handled by cast and crew, *The Misanthrope* is an absolute display of theatre excellence and is laugh out loud funny from start to finish.”
– **Liverpool Sound and Vision**¹¹

“Consider the play. Molière’s ‘Misanthrope,’ one of the most celebrated comedies ever written, is about a man named Alceste who becomes frustrated at the prevailing tendency to flatter people to their face, especially people in power, and then trash them in private. The play has remained popular these last 347 years because people still flatter others to their faces, especially those in power, and then trash them in private. It’s as simple as that. Think about Friday at your office. The fantasy of being able to say exactly what you think at all times, without regard for ongoing employment or one’s play in some stultifying professional or personal network, remains potent. And Molière had that desire down, deliciously.”
– **Chicago Tribune**¹²

“When Molière’s satiric play, *The Misanthrope*, first came to the stage in 1666 at the Théâtre du Palais-Royal in Paris, its mockery of society as duplicitous, self-aggrandizing, and narcissistic must have had audiences teary-eyed with laughter. Just so is Court Theatre’s deliciously decadent new production laugh out loud stuff.”
– **Chicago on the Aisle**¹³

¹⁰ What’s On Stage. “The Misanthrope: Press Reviews.” *English Touring Theatre*. English Touring Theatre, 2013. Web. 15 October 2015.

¹¹ Liverpool Sound and Vision. “The Misanthrope: Press Reviews.” *English Touring Theatre*. English Touring Theatre, 2013. Web. 15 October 2015.

¹² Jones, Chris. “The Misanthrope at Court Theatre.” *Chicago Tribune*. Chicago Tribune, 19 May 2013. Web. 16 October 2015.

¹³ Johnson, Lawrence B. “The Misanthrope at Court: Rants that Rhyme Keep Laughs Coming in Crisp, Modern Molière.” *Chicago on the Aisle*. Chicago on the Aisle, 30 May 2013. Web. 16 October 2015.

CHAPTER 3

The Approach

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

The Misanthrope, Act I scene ii

THE PROCESS

Over time, countless Célimène's have graced a myriad of stages around the world. Each brings a unique technique and a specific process to the role. The manner of developing and discovering a character is exclusive to the actor, and there is neither a solitary path nor a distinct destination.

The stages of developing a character, mapping the character's journey within the arc of the story, crafting character relationships, building trust and chemistry among cast and crew members, shaping technical choices such as blocking and pacing, and solidifying choices based on analysis are constantly evolving. This process is influenced by certain variables that surround any performance, such as the specific demands of the role and the production as a whole.

For me, the process of taking a role from page to practice to production is fluid and flexible; however, there are some foundational elements that lay the groundwork for a strong, stable performance.

Lines

The first step in the process for me is memorizing my lines. Line memorization takes place throughout the process with rehearsals, blocking, cues, etc. and is reaffirmed with each added step. However, I try to memorize my lines as early as possible because, as an actor, I am almost completely useless without them. This is in large part due to having to hold a script. With a script in my hand for reference, I am constantly having to disconnect with my scene partner and exit the moment in order to grab my next line. If my lines are not thoroughly memorized, I cannot be free to explore anything else.

I do a number of things to memorize my lines. I am deeply grateful to Devin Hodo, for countless nights spent on the porch repeating lines over and over again. I honestly do not know

how I would memorize my lines without the help of another. It allows me to get away from the script while still remaining accurate and precise.

I also like to do something physical while memorizing my lines in order to get them into my body and not just into my head. Regardless of whether I'm cleaning, dancing, pacing, running, or playing with my dog, I'm reciting lines.

I make a point to recite my lines at certain points throughout the day, particularly in the car and in the shower. Any time I am doing a relatively mindless activity, I am likely reciting my lines. I recite my lines every time I am in the car, so much so that even after the close of a show, I have a hard time breaking the habit.

Finally, I try to sing or rap my lines to different rhythms, to help me avoid falling into line readings and to make sure that I know them through muscle memory and not through any kind of cerebral activity. My mind should be able to venture anywhere it wants while I am reciting my lines. I tell my students if they can sing their lines to the tune of Happy Birthday (because those song lyrics are so engrained), then they are well on their way to really knowing their lines.

I take my line memorization this far so that I do not ever have to worry about it. Naturally, I still do, but if I can trust in the work I have done, I know my lines will be there when I need them to be, no matter where my mind goes or how loud my internal judges are. Knowing and trusting that my lines are there liberates me to put my focus elsewhere.

Script Analysis

The script analysis process involves a number of elements including objectives, actions and tactics, beats and beat changes, motivations, realizations, stimuli from other characters, decisions, ideas, and given circumstances. This also involves scoring – essentially, marking out

each of the aforementioned elements on the script (see Appendices III and IV). The script is the launch pad for the journey as well as the place of return when one loses the way.

I like to have a thorough understanding and analysis of the script before I begin any kind of character or scene analysis. Of course, all of these steps overlap and stretch throughout the entire rehearsal process.

After I have memorized my lines, I look at the story as a whole and consider the purpose in telling the story. Why are we doing this show at this time? What do we have to say?

For me, the answers to these questions could be found in Célimène's journey. There is so much deception, hypocrisy, and judgment in the world today. This is, perhaps, due to a fear of letting down one's defenses, a resistance to vulnerability and honesty. I do not necessarily believe this piece is constructed to teach a lesson, but simply to point out an issue, to expose the frailties and faults of human nature in a heightened reality.

What we need in the theatre is a space for actors to act in, a space reserved for them where they may practice their immemorial art of holding the mirror up to nature.¹⁴

Character Analysis

Like script analysis, character analysis takes place over the entire course of rehearsals and is constantly building on itself. Character analysis involves the character's objective, motivations, actions and tactics, decisions, realizations, memories, and ideas throughout the text. This kind of analysis also requires one to leave the launch pad and venture outside of the script. While the script is an excellent basis to get a general idea of the character, it cannot provide all of the information and stimuli necessary to create a multi-dimensional character. Characteristics

¹⁴ Jones, Robert Edmund. *The Dramatic Imagination*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.

such as voice, physicality, appearance, habits, gestures, and even personality are often not completed in the script.

I like to fill in these gaps by making decisions about the character based off of the information I have been given. Knowing the character's fears, dreams, pet peeves, aspirations, interests, reservations, background, etc. gives depth and dimension to the character and aids in motivating a character's choices.

Blocking and Technicalities

All of this analysis and exploration is taking place while the actual performance is being constructed. Costumes are being sewn, the world of the play is being built, and the mechanics of the story are being worked out night after night.

I work to make as many choices about the script and the character as I can before each scene is rehearsed for the first time. Knowing that all of my choices are subject to change, it (at the very least) gives me somewhere to start.

I particularly enjoy working blocking with Director Hoover, because he comes into rehearsal with a clean and clear vision of the scene, but he remains open and receptive as we work. He allows the scene to work itself out, rather than trying to force the ideas he has on paper onto the stage. He creates an environment for play and discovery, and I believe it contributes immensely to the overall performance.

There are all kinds of technicalities that are introduced during rehearsals. Ideally, these elements would be introduced as early as possible. In addition to working on script and character analysis, as well as finding the mechanical workings of each moment in the play, we are also working to solve technical problems such as: Which way does the door swing? How long is my cigarette holder? What kind of lighter should we use? How long does the cigarette last? How low

is the couch? How high are my heels? At which points can I drink my champagne during dialogue? How many steps will there be? How does the record player open? Etcetera.

Blocking and technical problem-solving is not simply about answering these questions, but about finding the right answers. It is not simply about going from point A to point B, but about finding the right motivation that gets me from point A to point B. It is a choreographed dance moved by impulse.

Inspirational Stimuli

Throughout the rehearsal process, I look for stimuli to inspire both my character and the world in which she lives. Stimuli including images, music, movies, dances, colors, textures, clothing, quotes, literature, and food all contribute to my process.

Play

Analysis inhabits a large part of my process – at least as far as can be plainly demonstrated and articulated. Within this process, however, there is an ever-present element of play. In this context, play refers to the freedom of trial without the consequences of error; it is the liberty to explore, to surprise, and to fail. With the component of play, one discovers the “right” choice by testing out all of the wrong ones first. Play is essential in keeping each moment alive by keeping all of the possibilities on the table.

The line memorization, analysis, and decision-making are all executed in order to reach a place of well-informed freedom. These steps fuel and inform the playfulness in order to make it productive. All of these steps are taken under the constant notions of discovery, exploration, and play.

I venture to go through the intellectual processes of developing a role first, so that I can open my mind for that which is beyond the cerebral, that which Viola Spolin refers to as intuition.

The intuitive way of knowing is neglected in our education in favor of reason (intellect). And yet what we prize – love, faith, art, and insightful knowledge – all reach beyond the intellect and depend on intuitive knowing and its great attribute, certainty. Viola says we must be thrown off balance and must blank out the intellect (the known): ‘break through the walls that keep us from the unknown, ourselves, and each other.’¹⁵

The element of play constantly reminds me to leave my intellect, to trust in the cerebral work that has been done, and to do anything and everything I can to shock myself into the present – the now.

¹⁵ Spolin, Viola. *Improvisation for the Theatre*. Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1983. Print.

INFLUENCES

A casserole of acting teachers, theories, and practices influence my journey with any role. Depending on the specific demands of the piece, some will carry more weight than others. I am constantly adding to my arsenal with each experience, but there are a few fundamentals that serve as the basis for my approach.

Constantine Stanislavsky

Stanislavsky perseveres as one of the primary, if not the primary, acting teachers in history. His ideas and practices continue to have a large influence on today's players, including myself. Stanislavsky's approach is known as The System, and it consists of a wide variety of techniques and tools of the trade. These include but are not limited to: relaxation, concentration, public solitude, sensory recall, imagination, the "magic if," given circumstances, action, objective, super objective, adaptation, tempo, the circle of attention, and emotion memory.

Of these, relaxation, concentration, action, objective, and the circle of attention serve as fundamental building blocks for my approach to any role, although I inevitably find myself playing with all of these ideas during the building process.

The promise of his system is this: if you use your imagination to enter, with belief, the imaginary circumstances of the play, and if you follow the correct objectives and actions through the play's length, then the proper emotions will follow you and inspiration will more likely come.¹⁶

Stella Adler

While I would like to familiarize myself more with Adler's teachings, I am aware of her concentration on the physical in order to access the emotional. This was largely influenced by her meeting with Stanislavsky. Stella's primary focus was on imagination, circumstances, and

¹⁶ Brestoff, Richard. *The Great Acting Teachers and Their Methods*. New Hampshire: Smith and Kraus, Inc., 1995. Print.

actions. As a highly physical actor, I appreciate the idea of accessing the emotional through a physical (rather than cerebral) exercise or through emotion recall.

The actor doing this does not focus on the emotion itself, but on the physical embodiment of it, the gestures, the voice, the animation – these will all lead him to the feeling. In this way, the actor can use memory, but avoid indulgence.¹⁶

Sanford Meisner

Meisner's approach, like Stanislavsky's, covers a vast assortment of solutions. His primary focus is centered around being present in the moment and concentrating fully and openly on one's scene partner. It is clear through my rehearsal journals that this is my primary focus as well. While there are a number of ways to access this presence, Meisner suggests an emphasis on listening.

Meisner's goal in his teaching is to get the actor out of the head and into the heart – into the body and soul of the moment. To be fully present in the moment is a beautiful and challenging place to be. Meisner defined acting as "living truthfully under imaginary circumstances," and it is this truthfulness that he endeavors to access.¹⁶

Meisner contributes to my approach in a number of ways, but perhaps most importantly, by reminding me to always return my focus to my scene partner. Objectives, motivations, and actions have their place, of course, and I use them as a basis for return when I am feeling false, unclear, or unmotivated. It is my scene partner in the end, however, who will keep my character and the story alive and breathing.

I am also grateful for Meisner's constant reminder to remain open, honest, and receptive in a moment. So much of the approach to acting deals with preparations and planning – Meisner refuses to forget the importance of stimulus, while still insisting one comes on stage ready and full.

Don't do anything until something happens to make you do it.¹⁶

Tadashi Suzuki

Some of the work I have most enjoyed thus far in my explorations comes from Suzuki. There is something undeniable in his approach to acting, and I am intrigued by the fact that his journey is one towards perfection and therefore, consistent failure.

Suzuki focuses highly on the physical, but uses this focus to access an inner fire and to maintain a sense of internal urgency and desire. There were a number of times throughout the role of Célimène that I applied Suzuki techniques (both consciously and, likely, subconsciously) to keep this fire burning. For example, in Act IV scene iv, Célimène is sitting on the couch listening intently to the conversation between Alceste and Du Bois. Célimène has no text to hang on to but cannot check out of the scene or relax. She must stay focused under heightened stakes throughout the conversation.

The same applies in Act V scene iv, during the scene which I refer to as “The Roast of Célimène.” Célimène, standing center stage, is being attacked from all sides, and yet she doesn't utter a single word and hardly makes a movement for nearly three pages. It was quite a challenge to maintain a level of urgency under rising stakes for this amount of time.

In these and other scenes, Suzuki's work helped me to keep the inner fire going even when the outer smoke appeared to clear. I hope to improve in this kind of training with time.

The actor must push himself forward, because his reward can only be in the attempt.¹⁶

Viola Spolin

Spolin, the mother of improvisation, reminds the actor to always maintain a sense of play in the work. While she is most known for her work with improvisation in the classroom, her philosophies can be applied to scripted work for performance as well. Spolin's work emphasizes play and focus.

Focus is not the content of focus; it is the effort to stay on focus.¹⁵

Anne Bogart

Bogart's work with Viewpoints has expanded my awareness on stage and has broadened my exploration with tempo, duration, kinesthetic response, repetition, shape, gesture, architecture, spatial relationship, and topography. With this production, architecture, tempo, spatial relationship, and gesture were very useful. Bogart encourages the actor to explore all the facets of the character's physicality and the world of the play.

This work was particularly useful in Act II scene iv in which Célimène is entertaining several different guests. Though my work with Viewpoints could be much improved, these elements allowed me to navigate that and other scenes with a more relaxed awareness.

The Herculean effort to pin down a particular emotion removes the actor from the simple task of performing an action, and thereby distances actors from one another and from the audience. Instead of forcing and fixing an emotion, Viewpoints training allows untamed feeling to arise from the actual physical, verbal and imaginative situation in which actors find themselves together.¹⁷

¹⁷ Bogart, Anne and Tina Landau. *The Viewpoints Book*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2005. Print.

THE WARM UP

Vocal: Breathing and Stretching

Roll Down and Up

Centering/Balancing

Connecting with Breath

Humming with Breath

Humming Series with Roll Down and Shake

Soft Palate Stretch

Tongue Stretches

Kuh Kuh Kuh (3-10 repetitions on breath)

Ngah Ngah Ngah with Pitches

Flay La La with Pitches

Jaw Stretch

Jaw Loosening

Vocal: Resonances

Chest – Hah with Shake

Hard Palate – Huh Huh

Teeth – Chee

Chee Ya Yay with Shake

Facial Isolations

Sinuses – Nasal Work

Forehead – Mi Me Shoo

Head – Key

Elevator – Ranges Up and Down

Vacuums – Back, Left, Right, and Front

Lower Diaphragm – Loser

Hips – Ho

Upper Diaphragm – Haw

Chest – Hi

Throat – Aw

Nasal – Murder

Head – Key

Blow Out Lips

Face and Jaw Loosening

Shake

Physical

Stretch Quads, Hamstrings, Calves, Hips, Biceps, Triceps, Shoulders, Back, Chest

Work Out Ankles and Wrists

Neck Rotations

Arm Rotations – Small, Medium, and Large

Side Stretch

Diction

Alphabet Repetitions – B Bah B Bay B Bee B Bi B Boh B Boo with All Consonants

Tongue Twisters

Repeat All Lines in Script with Exaggerated Annunciation

Show Preparation

Walk the Stage

Check Props and Costume

Run Through Lines

Work Impressions and Accents

Focus In

CHAPTER 4

Character Analysis: Célimène

Stop pretending that you are guilty!

The Misanthrope, Act IV scene iii

CHARACTER RELATIONSHIPS

Célimène is a very interesting and multi-layered character. On the surface, the text portrays Célimène as a flat, one-dimensional character with little redeeming value; however, deeper analysis proves otherwise. Célimène's character is most prominently demonstrated via her interactions with other characters.

Célimène has a strong relationship with Alceste, although it is not immediately obvious the two of them are perfect for one another. While they are two very different personalities, they are a great match for one another when it comes to intellect and argument. It is important the audience understands why Alceste and Célimène are attracted to one another, beyond the physical, so they have something to root for throughout the course of the story. If the audience does not discover a deeper level of connection between Alceste and Célimène, there is very little payoff in the end, regardless of whether or not the two end up together.

Dear Alceste

You are a complicated fellow and require a great deal of energy and perception, which I have. Poor Philinte tries his hardest to guide you in the right direction, but to no avail. It seems I am the only one who has your ear, and although you drive me mad at times, I do love you.

Célimène loves the art of letter writing, so much so that she chooses it as the instrument for her eventual demise. In building her character, this pastime served as an avenue for navigating and articulating Célimène's relationships with the other members of her world – and yes, it is her world.

You intrigue me. You challenge me. Your honesty is refreshing, though terribly annoying. I love that I am not always certain I am going to win the argument – although inevitably I always do. I love the risk you pose. I love your unwavering certainty, even when you are wrong. I love

the banter, the battle, the wit, and the clever quickness with which you counter my arguments. Of course, you irritate me to no end, and your distrust is insulting to say the least, but I am willing to forgive these misgivings in favor of curiosity.

We have been going on like this for some time now – 19 months and 3 days actually. I do not know what is keeping me from committing to you entirely, but you should know it has nothing to do with you. The relationships I maintain are strategic and purposeful, not fleeting and flirting as you suppose. There is a certain vulnerability required in giving oneself fully to another, and I simply cannot bring myself to embrace that vulnerability – not yet.

That being said, I have done all I can to let you know how much I care for you. Your constant suspicions and doubts are exhausting and insulting. They have no basis of proof, but stem from your own foolish insecurities. Frankly, I am tired of reassuring you, and I find it unfair that you are so insistent on these matters. You should know and trust that I am doing all that I can at the moment to make myself open and available to you. Your appreciation and trust could go a long way in your favor.

I do love you. Of course I love you. I only ask you be patient and still. Our time will come.

Dear Philinte

I appreciate how hard you try to keep Alceste on the right path – to keep him out of trouble in society. I empathize with you, as I know it is not an easy task.

You are a strange fellow. I see how much you long and languish over my cousin, Éliante, and yet you do nothing towards her hand. Instead, you encourage Alceste to seek it out, which we both know is a terrible idea.

I have spoken several times with Éliante on the matter. I encourage you to make your move before someone else does – I highly doubt she will resist in the least, and you are a much better match for her than her other suitors.

Keep an eye on Alceste, and I will do all I can on my end to steer your love in the right direction as well.

Dear Éliante

Our relationship has always been one of close, personal confidences full of encouragement and trust. I love having you as a cousin and know I can always come to you for support.

That being said, I am going to kill you. You know perfectly well I despise unfriendly confrontation, and you completely left me when I was being cornered by Oronte and Alceste to choose between them. I know you think it is amusing, but I need Oronte to stay in my favor, and we both know he would not have been my choice. You are fortunate I was saved by those insatiable marquis.

Speaking of making a choice, I hear Philinte has offered you his hand. You would be well advised to take it. He is the perfect gentleman for you, and he is much more interesting and intelligent than any of the others. I am curious to know: do you love him?

Dear Oronte

For the love of God, please stop following me around. As much as I need your favor for my own societal success, I simply cannot listen to another one of your dreadful verses. Do not be mistaken, you are attractive, charming, and full of character. You are adept in conversation and full of admirable qualities, but there is no way we could ever suit one another.

I know perfectly well why you want my hand – your offers of love and marriage are motivated by personal gain and blind acceptance. We do not actually know one another at all. Enough with the pretense.

Dear Acaste

You are simply delightful! I so much enjoy your company and find you bring a wonderful energy with you on all occasions. Of course, I find your extravagances a little overwhelming and I will never understand why you insist on changing bowties when the sun sets, but I do look forward to your company.

Unfortunately, that is the extent of our relationship. We are merely a social pair – imagine the two of us together without an audience. It could never work between us. I am entirely too intelligent for your humor, and you are entirely too arrogant for mine. Plus, I am very much disturbed by the idea of you making deals with Clitandre to battle it out for my hand.

I am afraid no one can win in that situation. As much as I would like for us to remain friends, perhaps it is best we go our separate ways, as I can see we can only entertain one another so much before the curtain falls.

Dear Clitandre

You have a lovely, patient presence about you, and you are an excellent complement to Acaste. While you are a very entertaining man in company, I must say I often find you tedious and trite. Your constant analyzing and pestering combined with your shallow inclinations will eventually drive me insane.

I hope one day you will understand why our relationship must come to an end. I am disappointed but not surprised you would stoop to making arrangements with Acaste – that you

would expose something so intimate and vulnerable from me were you to receive it. It is fortunate for me you will not, at least not in truthfulness.

In spite of this, I am going to miss our friendship and your company. I will not, however, miss those deplorable glasses you hide behind – as if you were immune to the magnifying lens yourself.

Dear Arsinoé

You have to be one of the silliest, most tiresome ladies I have ever encountered. I cannot begin to understand why you continue to go on as you do – painting your face and parading yourself for everyone to admire (especially under that atrocious hat). No one is falling for it. You are as hypocritical as everyone else, if not more so. Your prudish fronts and modest airs are fooling no one but yourself.

I know you have no investment in my success or good name. Your only interest is in Alceste's attentions, and you cannot stand the idea that they are directed towards me. I would love to see you try to redirect them.

I have done nothing to you and do not deserve your constant attacks. As much as you would like to witness my demise, it will do you no good. Your misfortunes are your own doing, and there is no justification for you taking them out on me. We can continue to play this little game, but we both know who will win in the end. You are a worthy adversary, I will give you that.

Dear Basque

I adore you. Thank you for your steady, quiet presence and your unfailing loyalty. If there is anything I can do to contribute to your success, do not hesitate to ask. You are a sweet, soft-spoken soul, and I encourage you to find your voice and to make your presence known. Do not

be afraid to interrupt the silly musings that go on in the parlor – often times, I welcome the chance to escape.

Dear Du Bois

We do not know each other very well, but I do not appreciate your coming into my house, interrupting my conversation with Alceste, and then dismissing me entirely. If Alceste is in some kind of danger, I should like to know about it. You are a foolish little man, and I honestly do not understand why Alceste keeps you around.

Tables Turned

An actor should always view the character they are playing as the “protagonist” of any scene or story. In *The Misanthrope*, Alceste is the protagonist of the story; however, Célimène is the protagonist of her life. The “crazy neighbors” do not view themselves as the crazy neighbors. That being said, it is helpful for the purposes of analysis to flip the perspective and consider how one’s character is perceived by others.

Others’ opinions or treatment of one’s character is often indicated through dialogue about one’s character, especially when the character being discussed is not present. This turn in perspective applies to both character analysis and script analysis and is marked by the pink highlighting in the Color Coded Scored Script found in Appendix III.

Of course, Alceste’s opinion is the one that matters most to Célimène. To Alceste, Célimène presents a conundrum. She displays every quality he despises in humankind, and yet, he loves her regardless of reason or reservation. In spite of his misanthropic convictions, Alceste loves Célimène because they are perfect for one another.

Célimène serves as the counter to Alceste. She represents all that he deplores in society and forces Alceste to face these realities when he insists on denying them entirely by fleeing all

mankind. Much like a mirror, Célimène exposes Alceste's true colors by demonstrating his opposite. Both characters are forced to face the mirror, so to speak, and each exposes the other's truth. Unfortunately, these opposites can never cross plains – can never reach one another. In the end, the two are left with nothing more than the shattering truth of their own reflections.

CHARACTER BONE STRUCTURE¹⁸

CÉLIMÈNE

Physiology

Sex: Female

Age: 24 (20 to the public)

Height: 5'4"

Weight: 115 (108 to the public)

Hair Color: Blonde

Eye Color: Hazel

Posture: Straight, shoulders pulled back, hands down, chin up, feet in first position

Appearance: Neat, beautiful, clean, manicured, fashionable, colorful, bright

Sociology

Socioeconomic Class: Upper

Occupation: Socialite, enjoyable company, highly skilled conversationalist, host

Education: Primary and secondary private school, private university tutoring

Home Life: Parents unhappily married, comfortable, versatile, full of opportunities

Marital Status: Single with suitors

Religion: Christian

Race, Nationality: Caucasian, French

Place in Community: Upper class socialite, highly respected, some influence

Political Affiliations: The winning party

Amusements, Hobbies: Drinking, smoking, writing, reading, music, hosting parties, painting

Psychology

Sex Life: Discreet

Moral Standards: Survival of the fittest, truth, love, and good favor

Personal Premise, Ambition: To secure a powerful place in society, to keep in with others

Frustrations, Disappointments: Distrust, tiresome relationships, accusations

Temperament: Energetic, outgoing, outspoken, confident, social, charming

Attitude towards Life: Determined, challenging, optimistic, confident, competitive

Complexes: Fear of vulnerability

Extrovert

Abilities: Piano, painting, writing, argumentation

Qualities: Creative, opinionated, uninhibited, intelligent, witty, funny, quick, persuasive

I.Q.: Very high

¹⁸ Egri, Lajos. *The Art of Dramatic Writing*. New York: Wildside Press, 2007. Print.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

A large part of character analysis involves finding answers to the questions left open in the script. *The Misanthrope* provides ample room for interpretation. I would like to make it clear I have not made these analytical choices in order to redeem Célimène or to make her character morally flawless – she is far from perfect. It is important that an actor never judge the character they are developing, and I have kept this in mind during Célimène's creation. These choices give Célimène an objective and an arc throughout the story as well as add dimension to her shallow nature.

At the end of the play, Célimène is left with basically nothing. She gives Alceste the last word as a parting gift and flees the scene. What I want most at the end of each journey is to run back onto the stage after the house lights come up and tell everyone my side of the story.

Célimène is a highly intelligent character who manipulates and uses the social structures around her to her advantage. She has built a defense for herself out of her social position and feeds that defense through the parties she hosts and the guests she is constantly entertaining. Alceste is the only one who even begins to access Célimène's vulnerable, true self.

She does truly enjoy playing the host and the entertainer. She delights in the attention and the amusement of it all. Elements of this lifestyle exhaust her, but she feels she needs these attentions in order to maintain and promote her status in society.

It often appears that Célimène is flirting and perhaps is in love with everyone she encounters. Upon closer examination, she *is* flirting, but it is clear her cordiality is merely a method of survival. She says plainly in Act II scene i she is only keeping in with Clitandre because of his influence regarding her lawsuit.

It's most unfair of you to take umbrage on [Clitandre's] 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?

(Act II scene i)

Throughout the entire story, Célimène is constantly trying to reassure Alceste of what she feels for him by making herself vulnerable to him. She comes very close a few times, but never actually manages to open herself to him fully until the very end when she offers her hand to him – in her mind this is the ultimate display of willingness and self-sacrifice – and he says no.

In Act III scene ii, Célimène overhears the two marquises, Clitandre and Acaste, discussing a deal. They have agreed to exchange proof with one another of Célimène's love, should they receive such evidence. Célimène chooses to pocket this information in case she needs it later.

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.

(Act III scene ii)

Later, in Act IV scene iii, Alceste and Célimène get into their most intense argument. The game is becoming more serious than either of them would like, and their relationship is reaching a boiling point. Alceste, towards the end of the scene, tells Célimène that he would wish misfortune upon her so that he might be the only one who could rescue her with his love.

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 that 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.

(Act IV scene iii)

Célimène finds this profession of love very strange, but pockets it as well, just in case.

One of the qualities Alceste is most attracted to is (likely) Célimène's intelligence. The idea that she would write these damning letters to both of the marquis without some good reasoning does not fit with her character in the least.

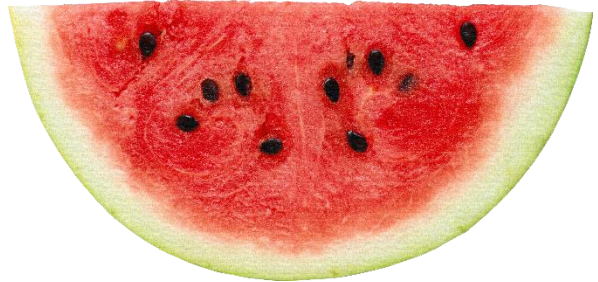
Célimène writes the letters to Acaste and Clitandre knowing they will inevitably exchange the information. She cannot very well just tell everyone to leave her company, but she can bring about her own demise, giving Alceste the opportunity he wished for in Act IV scene iii. By constructing her own fate, she is committing the ultimate display of self-sacrifice and will see if Alceste truly loves her as much as he claims.

If Alceste really loves her, he will forgive her "betrayal," and Célimène will finally be free to make herself fully open and available to him. She is, in the end, choosing her love for Alceste over the societal benefits she has worked so hard to maintain. Unfortunately, even this is not enough for Alceste, a man of extremes, so she goes so far as to offer her hand to him, trusting he will recognize how difficult it is for her to allow herself to be so exposed and vulnerable. Alceste, however, remains a contrarian to the very end, and Célimène is left hanging.

Molière may or may not agree with these conclusions about Célimène's justifications and motivations, but they are all well supported by the text. This reasoning prevented me from judging Célimène's choices, and provided me with a connection to my character, high stakes in which to play, and a clear journey to my objective. Célimène is more than a product of her environment and circumstance. She is a complicated and multi-faceted human being.

STIMULI FOR INSPIRATION

Colors



Music

Frank Sinatra, *Come Fly with Me*

Frank Sinatra, *I Get a Kick Out of You*

Frank Sinatra, *My Way*

Frank Sinatra, *Didn't We*

Frank Sinatra, *Luck Be a Lady*

Frank Sinatra and Count Basie, *I Wish You Love*

Frank Sinatra and Count Basie, *The Tender Trap*

Frank Sinatra and Count Basie, *I Can't Stop Loving You*

Harry Connick, Jr., *The Way You Look Tonight*

Dean Martin, *Sway*

Dean Martin, *On the Street Where You Live*

Dean Martin, *Kiss*

Eileen, *These Boots are Made for Walking*

Bobby Darin, *Mack the Knife*

Sylvie Vartan, *Par Amour, Par Pitié*

Etta James, *A Sunday Kind of Love*

Nat King Cole, *I Love You for Sentimental Reasons*

Nat King Cole, *You Stepped Out of a Dream*

Dario Marianelli, *Pride and Prejudice Film Score*

Rolf Lovland, *Songs from a Secret Garden*

Fryderyk Chopin, *Nocturne Piano No. 8 in D Flat*

Trae Tha Truth and Big Krit, *I'm on 2.0*

Franz Schubert, *Impromptu for Piano in G Flat*

Camille Saint-Saens, *The Swan*

Jingle Punks Hipster Orchestra, *Lisztomania*

The Rat Pack, *Just One of Those Things*

...and many, many more.

Food and Beverage



Fashion





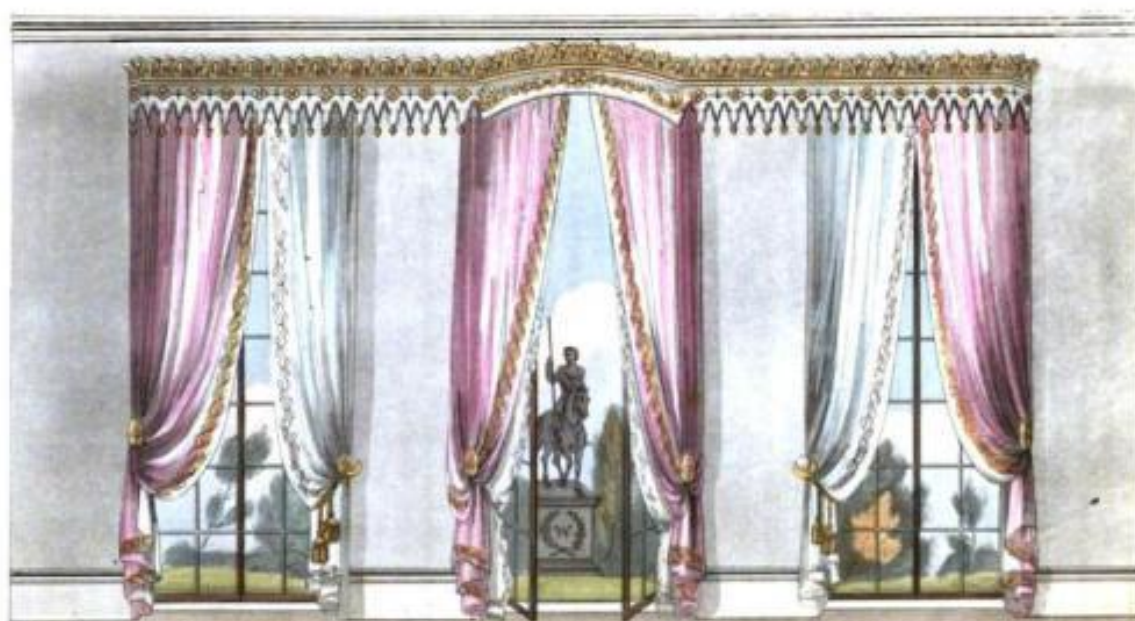
Fabrics



Images







WINDOW DRAPERY.



CHAPTER 5

The Misanthrope Script Analysis

But this is worth the trouble of reading.

The Misanthrope, Act V scene iv

SCENE SYNOPSES¹⁹

Act I, scene i in which:

Philinte and Alceste argue about the necessity and usefulness of telling the truth.

Act I, scene ii in which:

Oronte presents a sonnet to Philinte and Alceste, who do not think much of his writing.

Act I, scene iii in which:

Alceste and Philinte leave arguing about Alceste's insistence on telling Oronte the truth about his sonnet.

Act II, scene i in which:

Alceste scolds Célimène for keeping too many gentleman callers.

Act II, scene ii in which:

Basque comes to announce that Acaste, one of Célimène's callers, has arrived.

Act II, scene iii in which:

Basque comes to announce that Clitandre, one of Célimène's callers, has arrived, and Alceste decides to leave.

Act II, scene iv in which:

Alceste stays and listens to the gossip fest amongst Célimène, Éliante, Philinte, Acaste, and Clitandre.

Act II, scene v in which:

Basque announces that an officer has arrived for Alceste.

Act II, scene vi in which:

The officer tells Alceste that he must appear at the court of the Marshals of France.

Act III, scene i in which:

Clitandre and Acaste argue over Célimène's attentions and agree to tell one another if Célimène gives either one any indication of her preference.

Act III, scene ii in which:

Célimène asks Clitandre and Acaste if they know who has just arrived in the carriage downstairs.

Act III, scene iii in which:

Basque comes to announce that Arsinoé has arrived, and Célimène goes on a rant about Arsinoé's hypocrisy.

Act III, scene iv in which:

Célimène and Arsinoé exchange mutual information and advice concerning each other's reputations, until Célimène leaves Alceste to entertain Arsinoé in her absence.

Act III, scene v in which:

Arsinoé and Alceste discuss Alceste's potential success in the Court, and Arsinoé tells Alceste that she does not agree with his love for Célimène, placing doubts in his mind of her loyalty.

¹⁹ Howard, Pamela. *What is Scenography?* New York: Routledge, 2009. Print.

Act IV, scene i in which:

Philinte rants about Alceste's stubbornness and confesses his love to Éliante.

Act IV, scene ii in which:

Alceste asks Éliante to avenge him for Célimène's betrayal (proven by a letter) by giving him her hand, and Éliante refuses even though she fancies Alceste.

Act IV, scene iii in which:

Alceste confronts Célimène about the letter, and she blames him for not trusting her love and loyalty.

Act IV, scene iv in which:

Du Bois comes to tell Alceste that they must leave at once, because Alceste is in danger of being arrested.

Act V, scene i in which:

Alceste tells Philinte that he is determined to leave humanity and live in the wilderness alone (or with Célimène), because he has lost his case.

Act V, scene ii in which:

Oronte and Alceste confront Célimène and ask her to make her choice between the two, forbidding the other to ever see her again.

Act V, scene iii in which:

Célimène looks to Éliante for an escape from Oronte and Alceste's demands, but Éliante refuses to help her as Oronte and Alceste continue to press her for her preference.

Act V, scene iv in which:

Acaste, Clitandre, and Arsinoé arrive with letters which expose Célimène's slanderous confessions of her distaste for Acaste, Clitandre, Oronte, and Alceste. All leave except for Alceste who chooses to forgive her if she will leave humankind with him; however, Célimène refuses, offering her hand in marriage instead, which Alceste denies. Alceste asks Éliante to excuse him for not pursuing her hand, and she chooses to give it to Philinte. Philinte and Éliante then follow Alceste to convince him to give up his plan to flee civilization.

SCORED SCRIPT: OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

To stay focused on my character's journey and overarching goal in the play, I determine potential actions or tactics for each moment my character experiences. These actions ensure that I am always coming on stage with something to do and aid me in keeping my attention on my scene partner. Célimène has an objective for each scene as well, which gives her something to fight for as she navigates each interaction. The possibility of failure is always present; therefore, I give myself a plethora of actions to choose from, so that when one is not working to achieve my objective I am ready to try something new, keeping me prepared and progressing. These choices become my lifeline of focus and motivation in a world of unpredictable and uncontrollable circumstances.

<i>THE MISANTHROPE</i>	
Act II scene i	
Objective: To win the battle of wits against Alceste and dodge his requests	
So from what I see, you only insisted on seeing me home so that you could scold me.	To Try To Test To Challenge
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?	To Poke To Guilt To Push To Tease To Mock
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?	To Chide To Slap To Play To Ridicule To Call Out
You're becoming jealous of the whole universe.	To Chastise To Mock
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?	To Battle To Counter To Trap
The satisfaction of knowing that you are loved.	To Toss
I think when I have gone so far as to tell you so, such an admission should be quite sufficient.	To Belittle To Stiff Arm To Resist
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 no one can deceive you but yourself. Perhaps you're happy now.	To Turn To Use To Outsmart To Catch
Love such as yours is unprecedented.	To Approach To Match To Meet

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.	To Run To Scold To Belittle To Ridicule To Single Out To Humiliate To Hint
Act II scene ii	
Objective: To teach Alceste about the importance of keeping good favor	
What is it?	To Announce To Redirect To Acknowledge
Very well. Show him up.	To Allow To Give the Go Ahead
Would you have me offend him?	To Invite
He's the sort of man who would never forgive me if he knew that his presence was unwelcome.	To Test To Placate
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.	To Wake Up To Validate To Convince To Detail To Enlighten To Punch To Lecture To Warn To Teach
Act II scene iii	
Objective: To get Alceste to stay with me	
Where are you running off to?	To Stop
Stay.	To Command
Do stay.	To Beg To Grab To Get His Attention
I want you to.	To Instigate To Entice
But I want you to, I want you to!	To Fight To Argue
Very well then. Go! Be off. Do as you please!	To Toss To Trash To Shut Down

Act II scene iv	
Objective: To delight my company and to put Alceste in his place	
Yes. (<i>To Basque:</i>) More champagne for the company. (<i>To Alceste:</i>) Haven't you gone?	To Affirm To Request To Challenge
Hush!	To Warn
Have you lost your senses?	To Put Down
Oh!	To Dampen To Caution
I suppose this is a joke?	To Bite
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.	To Warn To Throw To Validate Clitandre
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.	To Bolster To Sympathize To Share To Cap To Invite
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.	To Reach To Entertain To Relate To Offer To Mock To Give To Humor To Seal To Perform
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'.	To Delight To Set Up To Captivate To Enlist To Trash To Punchline To Finish

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.	<p>To Get To Draw In To Confess To Reveal To Beckon To Mock To Take on a Ride To Lead To Warn</p>
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 place or preferment offered that isn’t an injustice to his own idea of himself.	<p>To Startle To Dismiss To Mock To Confide To Relate To Extend</p>
That he owes his reputation to his cook. People don’t go to see him, they go to visit his table.	<p>To Lighten To Of Course Silly</p>
Yes, if only he didn’t serve up his own company with it! His stupidity takes a good deal of stomaching. To my mind, it completely ruins the dinners he gives.	<p>To Add To Shut Up To Take Back To Brush Off Éliante</p>
He’s a friend of mine.	<p>To Placate To Stall To Dangle To Lead On To Tempt</p>

<p>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.</p>	<p>To Satisfy To Humor To Call On To Educate To Share To Hint To Nod To Reach To Lead To Counter Potential Rebuffs To Poke Fun To Seal the Deal</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>To Soften To Still To Slow To Relate To Mock To Belittle To Expose To Call Out To Save To Recover</p>
<p>But –</p>	<p>To Protest</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>To Ridicule To Challenge To Reason To Mock</p>

Suppose we drop the subject now and take a turn in the gallery. Are you staying gentlemen?	To Redirect To Enliven To Refresh To Stop
(<i>To Alceste:</i>) You think this amusing, I suppose?	To Chide To Wink
Act II scene v	
Objective: To prevent Alceste from making a scene at the party	
(<i>To Alceste:</i>) Go and see what it is, or else have him come up.	To Steer Away To Advise To Quiet
Act II scene vi	
Objective: To keep Alceste from making a fool of himself and ruining the party	
(<i>To Philinte:</i>) What's this?	To Hello?! To Grab Attention
Go quickly and obey the summons.	To Protect To Save To Hush
Act III scene ii	
Objective: To intrigue Acaste and Clitandre	
Still here?	To Appeal To Greet
I heard a carriage below. Do you know who it is?	To Redirect To Stiff Arm To Lead To Seek
Act III scene iii	
Objective: To get Acaste and Clitandre on my side	
What does that woman want with me?	To Kick To Huff
What can she be thinking of? Who on earth asked her to come here?	To Search To Plan To Seek Blame

<p>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 pretense 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...</p>	<p>To Affirm To Cut Off To Take Up To Thank To Disgust To Humor To Entertain To Mock To Encourage To Get To Win To Reveal To Confide To Shock To Anger To Bite To Brush To Belittle To Get Pity</p>
Act III scene iv	
Objective: To kill Arsinoè with kindness and to win the game	
<p>Ah! What happy chance brings you here? Madame, in all honesty, I have been so worried about you.</p>	<p>To Recover To Cover To Slow Arsinoè Down To Please</p>
<p>Heaven be praised! I'm so pleased to see you.</p>	<p>To Lighten To Convince</p>
<p>Shall we sit down?</p>	<p>To Feel Out To Test</p>

<p>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</p>	<p>To Confess To Enlighten To Please To Build Up To Bless Your Heart To Set Up To Encourage To Build To Boost To Bolster To Befriend To Confess To Reveal with Hesitation To Tip Toe To Circle To Astonish To Shock To Befuddle To Bewilder To Show To Badger To Expose To Cushion To Placate To Teach To Pacify To Soothe To Sweeten To Advise To Aid To Drill To Foster To Edify To Guide</p>
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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.	<p>To Clarify To Shut Down To Hint To Put Arsinoè in Her Place To Sweeten To Flatter To Wink To Reach To Befriend To Clear</p>
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.	<p>To Correct To Lead To Dodge To Make Her Feel Stupid To Offer To Deal To Threaten To Propose</p>
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.	<p>To Separate To Educate To Insult To Burn To Humble To Reason To Remind To Love To Support</p>

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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To Guilt To Rebuff To Push To Expose To Humiliate To Invite To Bite To Blame To Shame To Enlighten To Plead Innocence To Put My Hands Up
Have them then, by all means Madame! Let's see how you do it. Show us the secret, try to make yourself attractive and –	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To Encourage To Out-Compliment To Push To Persuade To Ridicule To Belittle To Show the Way To Open the Door
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. (<i>Enter Alceste.</i>) 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To Win To Control To Stop To Overcome To Lead To Kill with Humility To Direct To Put Off To Plead To Demand To Back Out To Guide
Act IV scene iii	
Objective: To dampen Alceste's raging by shutting down his accusations and taking a stand	
What's this? Whatever's the matter with you? Why the sighs? What do these black looks mean?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To Pick To Perk To Examine To Judge To Study
These are novel compliments, I must say!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To Humor To Soften To Bolster To Chide

Why are you raving like this? Tell me, have you taken leave of your senses?	To Embarrass To Humiliate To Undercut
What treachery have you to complain of?	To Call Out To Search
So this is what's troubling you?	To Dampen To Deflate
Why should I blush?	To Confuse To Toss Back
Why should I disown a letter in my own handwriting?	To Humiliate To Mislead To Underscore
You are, truly, a strange and foolish man!	To Dismiss To Toss
Oronte? Who said the letter was meant for him?	To Befuddle To Deduce
But if the letter were addressed to a woman, what harm would it do you? What would there be wrong in that?	To Test To Push To Suffocate To Squash
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!	To Turn To Accuse To Push Back
No, I'll do no such thing. You can think what you like about it. It matters little to me.	To Brush Off To Stiff Arm To Throw Away
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.	To Punish To Disgust To Tease To Shoo To Flick To Shove To Mock To Throw in His Face

<p>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.</p>	<p>To Turn On To Charge To Reason To Stump To Guilt To Blame To Hurt To Soften To Shame To Beckon To Trap To Scare To Crucify To Punch To Threaten To Challenge To Assail To Fuck You To Rouse To Intimidate To Undermine To Test To Take My Stand</p>
<p>Oh no, you don't love me as you should.</p>	<p>To Hook To Smother To Put Out</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>To Humiliate To Ridicule To Underplay To Guilt To Warn To Distract To Redirect To Escape</p>
<p>Act IV scene iv</p>	
<p>Objective: To figure out what the hell Du Bois is talking about</p>	
<p>What's behind all this?</p>	<p>To Calm To Seek</p>

Don't lose your temper. Go and find out what all this means.	To Reason With To Stop To Appear To Control To Refocus
Act V scene ii	
Objective: To get out of the corner that Oronte and Alceste have backed me into	
But what terrible thing is it that has turned you so much against him? I have often heard you speak highly of his qualities.	To Redirect To Qualm To Soften
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.	To Throw Off To Stop To Still To Put Off To Stall To Assert To Slow Down To Shame To Guilt To Correct To Propose To Brush Off
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.	To Shock To Turn To Challenge To Counter To Escape

Act V scene iii	
Objective: To appeal to Éliante and get her to help me escape Oronte and Alceste	
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?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To Get To Win To Shock To Team Up To Connect To Humor To Invite
Act V scene iv	
Objective: To prove my love by making myself vulnerable and open to Alceste	
Yes, you may say anything. You have a right to complain and reproach me with anything you care to name. I'm in the wrong 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To Admit To Invite To Open To Give In To Separate To Bolster To Clear the Palate To Clean To Specialize To Validate To Assure To Grab To Clarify To Meet To Offer To Expose To Allow To Prepare
What? Renounce the world before I'm old and bury myself in some rural wilderness!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To Process To Stall To Consider To Search

<p>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 –</p>	<p>To Cushion To Prepare To Protect To Surprise To Please To Invite To Excite To Compromise To Propose To Give</p>
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CHAPTER 6

Production Manuscripts

The proof of true love is to be unsparing in fault-finding.

The Misanthrope, Act II scene iv

REHEARSAL JOURNAL

First Read: Saturday, March 7 (1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.)

This is going to be fun! When I first read this script, I enjoyed it simply for the poetic and heightened language, but there were a lot of holes to be filled in regards to character, setting, and even storyline. After our first table read, I can see that some of these gaps are already beginning to be filled. I am thrilled with this cast and am eagerly looking forward to seeing what everyone brings to their individual characters.

My goal throughout this entire rehearsal process is to serve as a good scene partner to my colleagues by remaining open, playful, and present. I also aim to create a full, multi-dimensional character in Célimène and to make her journey as clear as possible. I aim to tackle the challenges presented in Molière's text by stretching my vocal abilities and finding opportunities for variety and nuance. I am also going to work to dig deep into the script in order to pinpoint every aspect of Célimène's character.

Throughout this process, it is important to me to stay out of my head and focused on the individual moments of each scene. It is also important to me to find a clear, motivated objective and to make sure that each of Célimène's choices move her closer to her objective.

While I want this show to be the best it can be, much of my energy will be focused on the journey rather than the destination, for now. On to the next.

Thursday, March 12 (7:00 p.m. to 8:40 p.m.)

Table read – Act II, scenes i, ii, iii, iv, and v

Tonight's table read went really well. I found myself stumbling over the words a lot and dropping lines I had thought I had memorized. Adding character elements caused me to lose lines and words that I knew very well before – clearly, I'm not quite there yet. Apart from the stumbling, we did some playing tonight with character interactions and explored a few of the motivations behind Célimène's words.

I believe her relationship and attraction to Alceste is complicated but very real – she actually does love him whether she realizes it or not. Célimène is attracted to Alceste because of the nature of their relationship and because of the challenge he presents. She loves to play the game. Célimène and Alceste speak with each other in a very unique way. Their conversations are challenging, intellectual, teasing, playful, witty, heightened, poetic, flirtatious, and mildly insulting. They understand each other in this language that no one else seems to grasp. Célimène likes having these conversations with Alceste all to herself – there is a mutualism in it.

At the same time, Célimène wants Alceste to play the game. She is attracted to his resistance to and detestation of humanity so long as it does not interfere with her ability to conduct her social life. She likes playing the game in society as much as she likes playing the game with him. While she finds it amusing, she also admires his unwavering noble conscience – She likes that he will say out loud exactly what she is thinking.

I had fun tonight playing in the table read with each of the cast members. I am feeling very optimistic about the script and the show, if I can just get these stupid lines down. On to the next.

Saturday, March 14 (1:00 p.m. to 2:45 p.m.)

Table read – Act II, scene vi and Act IV scenes i, ii, iii, and iv

Today I am thinking a lot about the vocal quality of Célimène, as well as her love of words. Célimène takes a great deal of pride in her ability to articulate things, and she uses words as her weapons. She is cunning, precise, and purposeful in her choice of words, although she makes it seem second-handed and completely incidental rather than intentional.

Rehearsal today went well. We talked some about Célimène's relationship with Alceste and some of the irony contained in the game. Célimène, like Alceste, speaks her mind – she says exactly what she thinks. The difference between her and Alceste is that she does not speak these “truths” directly to the people they are regarding; however, she doesn't do a lot of sucking up to people either.

The question came to my mind today as to whether or not Célimène is purely “reactionary.” Of course, for me, the answer is no. The conversation centered a lot on Alceste's driving intentions – his goals – and how Célimène reacts to them. Her reactions are based on goals of her own. The question I am working on answering is: What is *she* driving?

We also talked about repetitions – Célimène has a habit of saying the same thing in twenty different ways. As I am getting the lines down, I am searching for ways to give each repetition its own tactic for driving the point to avoid the monologues sounding like simple, repetitive rants. Each new articulation makes its own point, and I think this is an element that Célimène thoroughly enjoys in her conversations with Alceste.

The words are coming out more clearly today, although it's likely because I had less to say. There is one fantastically juicy monologue in Act IV scene iii that I am looking forward to playing with more. On to the next.

Monday, March 16 (7:00 p.m. to 8:45 p.m.)

Table read – Act III scenes iv and v and Act V scenes i, ii, iii, and iv

Tonight's table work was very helpful, because we had a lot of group discussion regarding characters and the motivations for the choices made at the end of the play. I thoroughly enjoy the scene with Meghan (Arsinoé), and I cannot wait to get it on its feet. Although the lines are still tripping me up here and there, I worked many hours this weekend to get off book and feel that I am making progress. David (Alceste), Ashton (Éliante), and I also did a vocal warmup before rehearsal tonight that helped me to get my mouth around the words and prepared me for the lengthy dialogue.

The scene with Meghan (Arsinoé) is very much a “bless your heart” scene. In the beginning we are saying the most pleasant things to one another, but the tone is telling the story. This is a marathon of subtext. Director Hoover mentioned something tonight about using the “madame's” to drive the point, and I like to think of them as weapons or little daggers to her blessed heart. As we build in tension and pleasantries towards the end of the scene, the words become much more “through the teeth” (at least for myself) as it becomes more and more difficult to conceal my bitterness and anger. I also find it interesting that, although I take a variety of stabs at Arsinoé, she chooses to respond to comments on her age and beauty – you're not that much younger than me, rather than, I abhor nudity. This is going to be a really fun scene, and I am grateful for the opportunity to work with Meghan (Arsinoé).

A question I need to answer for myself relates to the note I reference at the end of Act III, scene iv. So far, I've decided that the note is simply an excuse to get out of the conversation, but I have not settled on that. Like everything, this is subject to change.

Act V presents some interesting challenges, and much of the conversation tonight centered on the letters I have written slandering my various gentleman callers. I am too smart to have written such letters (particularly to the marquis) knowing that they will likely be shared with others, bringing me to ruin.

I am leaning toward the idea that I sent the letters in order to start this quarrel resulting in the loss of all of my gentleman callers, save for Alceste. I wonder if the reference to Alceste's "green ribbons" is a sort of wink to him – maybe that's my favorite ascot or one I gave him. It is also interesting to note that in the letter I refer to a quality I know he takes pride in, so it's not so much an insult as it may seem.

Again, this is all very much subject to change. On to the next.

Tuesday, March 17 (5:00 p.m. to 6:15 p.m.)

Advanced Voice for the Actor, James Yeargain

I had what I think people refer to as a “breakthrough” in class today. I’ve been working on a particular monologue for several weeks now, talking with James about the work and what I want to accomplish after class each day. My goals going into this class were finding a strong, supported voice that could be heard and developing a neutral American accent.

Today I was dreading my monologue. When it was time for me to deliver, I felt self-conscious and insecure. James advised me to take in a breath and just go, so I did. After the first two lines or so, I hardly remember what happened. I remember focusing intently on a spot on the chalkboard that I really couldn’t even see, because I was seeing something or someone else entirely beyond that.

James and I have been working on the concept of the as-if. To be honest, I’ve never liked this concept – likely because it has never worked for me, and I’ve never really understood it, although I thought I did. Now I get it. I came in with a strong as-if, and it worked because it gave me something to focus on outside of my work and my goals. Focusing on the as-if, I was forced to trust in the work I had done before today – I was forced to trust my body to come through and to do what I needed it to do. And it did.

Until today, I can honestly say I had doubts in my body, especially regarding my voice. I don’t doubt my work, but I have doubted my body’s ability to work for me. Today I didn’t focus on any of that, and to my surprise, the wheels did not come off. I think I have had a hard time focusing on the moment, the as-if, my scene partner, etc. in the past because of these doubts – I am constantly reminding myself to remember this and fix that, rather than trusting it to happen.

Of course, this is part of the process, but I am eager to move forward in developing this newly discovered trust.

We do the work beforehand so we can forget it. We do the work so we can trust our bodies, our voices, our work to come through to tell our truth. When we trust the work to follow us and the wheels not to fall off when we stop thinking and stop trying, we can focus on the moment and that's when our truth gets told.

My only hope is that this can be repeated – story goes, it can. I think the work comes first so the truth can come last, and it is the focus that gets repeated.

Of course, I think this is something I have known, but wasn't sure I believed, at least not for me. Today, I can at least know it is possible, and that is immensely encouraging. Perhaps it will never happen again, but it can.

I completely lost myself in my monologue today, and stayed focused on the person I was speaking to – the person in my as-if. I do fear I might lose something if the monologue were put on stage with a scene partner whom I would need to focus on instead of my as-if. That requires even more trust, I suppose.

Today my voice got heard, and it felt great. It was exhausting, rattling, and unnerving, but people *heard* it. Afterward I felt so broken and braindead, as if the work literally beat the shit out of me – it was a fantastic release. I'm having a hard time letting it go, like I want to hold on to it for fear I might lose it and never get it back. It's like I've tapped into a well, and I'm afraid to shut it off.

My monologue in class today was one of the few moments when I have felt, without a doubt, truthful and fully invested in the moment - so much so that I hardly remember it. I hope I can find that again. I want it. I need it, desperately. I have to find that again.

I have this need to articulate it – to write it down and make it permanently accessible, although I know full well that that's not how it works. That moment, sitting, hanging, fighting in that true moment – that is why I am here. That is why I am putting myself through this. That is what I am seeking. That is what keeps me and why I can't walk away. And for now, that is where I have to leave it. On to the next.

Second First Read: Saturday, August 15 (1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.)

Well this has been interesting. We are back in action with *The Misanthrope*, and I am genuinely enthusiastic after today's reading. I fear that I have a lot of questions still to answer, however.

I am about 75% memorized and should be completely off book soon. I can feel myself falling into line readings, so I am working on trying to memorize rote and to shake things up as often as possible both physically and vocally. The memorization for this piece is particularly difficult because of the repetition and foreign sentence structures.

I am having fun with this character. Célimène is a complicated woman – smart, cunning, and lightly mischievous. I feel she knows exactly what she wants from the very beginning. It is tempting to say that she has accidentally fallen into her situation, but I believe there is more to her than that. She is more than a pretty, reactionary face.

That being said, there is a lot of mystery surrounding this character and a lot of unanswered questions. For example, what does my lawsuit entail? Why am I referred to as a widow? Who did I write the final letter to? Was it written with the intention of being found? What is the note I cannot postpone? Perhaps most importantly, why do I leave in the end? These answers, I am sure, will come with time. On to the next.

Thursday, August 20 (7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.)

Rehearsal tonight went well. I thoroughly enjoy working with Mitchel (Acaste) and Muhammad (Clitandre). Unfortunately, I thought I was far more prepared with my lines than I actually was. Turns out, as soon as I get on my feet, the lines leave me. I try to memorize my lines by connecting them with some kind of physicality (running, doing dishes, dancing, etc.); however, it seems I still have a lot of work to do. I was disappointed that for the first time in a long time, I had to pick up my script in rehearsal.

I'm going to attribute this to distraction. In the same day (yesterday), I started teaching, working in the scene shop, attending class, taking on Lakefront Players responsibilities, running and promoting Risky Business, and rehearsing all at once. Needless to say, I am not quite back in the routine. I fear I do not have much time to get back in the swing of things, and I am feeling the pressure. I am immensely distracted.

That's one of the things I love about rehearsals. When I come into a rehearsal, I feel I am entering a space that is untouched by the outside world. It's different. It's refreshing. The theatre, particularly in rehearsal, is a place of focus and attention. If I feel distracted or checked out of a rehearsal, I will get nothing done – nothing will be accomplished. If I can enter the space in a focused and calm mindset, leaving deadlines and duties at the door, then time seems to fly by, and there is no end to my energy. Wouldn't it be nice if everything in life worked that way?

Beyond the lines, I have a lot of work to do with Célimène. She is complicated. Right now the challenge is in keeping her human. There is plenty in the text to show her confident, manipulative, flirtatious, party-animal side, but I am searching for more subtle moments in which to explore the human side, the sympathetic side, the moral side. Célimène is far from a one dimensional character, and I am working to keep her that way. On to the next.

Friday, August 21 (7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.)

Things were okay tonight, but I am not feeling my best. I thoroughly enjoyed playing with Meghan Shea (Arsinoé) – I always learn a lot any time I get to work with her. Tonight we worked on the “bless your heart” scene between Célimène and Arsinoé. Again, I tripped over my lines much more than I expected to. I have a very long monologue in the scene, and I can recite it word for word without any problem, but for some reason, as soon as I am on my feet in rehearsal the lines leave me. However, the blocking does facilitate in furthering my memorization.

One thing I am working on specifically after this rehearsal is listening. Truly listening on stage is one of the hardest things to do. It is difficult because you want to genuinely listen rather than “appearing” to listen, and yet, you already know what the other person is going to say. I do a lot of listening in this scene and throughout the entire play.

I have found that picking out specific words and repeating them in my head is helpful in keeping myself focused. Also, asking myself questions (while the other person is talking) about what the other person is saying helps me to continue reading my scene partner for subtext clues and figure out what they are really trying to say. I have found myself doing this with Meghan (Arsinoé), and of course, she always gives me plenty to play with. On to the next.

Saturday, August 22 (1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.)

Today's rehearsal was very productive. I felt much more focused and connected on stage, and was surprised at how much work we were able to get done. With opening night fast approaching, everyone seemed highly invested in making progress.

The role of Clitandre was recast, and the new player, Khali, is wonderful to work with, though I will miss the opportunity to work with Muhammad. Today my main focus was serving as a good scene partner for my fellow players, as well as avoiding falling into a monotonic rhythm in my longer speeches.

We worked Acts II and III today, and I was on my feet the entire time. I am feeling a little anxious about our timeline, but if rehearsals continue to be as productive as they were today, I think it can be a really good show.

At this point, I am beginning to nail down the lines, along with the blocking, and am looking further into Célimène's actions, intentions, and motivations. Of course, these are elements I have kept in mind throughout the entire process, but I am beginning to feel a license to begin exploring these possibilities in more depth. The technical necessities are starting to make way for the life and humanity of the story.

That being said, I still was not where I wanted to be with lines tonight. Hopefully, they will come. On to the next.

Monday, August 24 (7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.)

Tonight we worked Act IV, scenes i, ii, iii, and iv. My goal in scenes iii and iv is to make my actions clearer and more specific – particularly with Célimène’s monologue to Alceste at the end of scene iv. David (Alceste) and I are still playing with the dynamic of this scene. It begins as playful and harmless but quickly escalates when the accusations become more serious than Célimène would like.

Célimène is offended that Alceste could accuse her of something so base and ungracious. She honestly believes that her having told Alceste she loves him should be enough. He should have complete confidence in her loyalty, despite (not in spite of) her actions. It is the fine line between actions and words.

For Célimène, admitting she loves someone is an enormous step. She is giving a lot in making herself so vulnerable. She expects the person she loves to be satisfied with “such admissions” (Act V scene iv) and is offended when Alceste is so easily swayed by a letter he thinks is written to Oronte. The question is: Who was the letter really addressed to? Was it written to Oronte and Célimène is covering? Was it written to a woman as she says? Was it written to Alceste?

Molière leaves a lot of room for interpretation through unanswered questions. It is both frustrating and empowering to find these answers through Célimène. On to the next.

Tuesday, August 25 (7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.)

Tonight's rehearsal was quite short. We worked Act V scene ii with Célimène, Alceste, and Oronte. This scene provides an interesting challenge, because Célimène is being "persecuted" (Act V scene iii) by Alceste and Oronte, but does not say much (technically) in her defense. She has a lengthy build to her explosion during which she remains completely quiet.

I have a hard time imagining Célimène being so patient when she is being cornered in this way. She is much more defensive and eager to justify her actions, which she eventually attempts to do. I am working on pacing this build so the explosion is the right size in proportion to the stimuli from Alceste and Oronte.

I am also not entirely clear on Célimène's relationship with Oronte. He claims she has professed her love for him through her letters, and I wonder how much of this is true. Célimène does feel the need to "keep in" with everyone – to please everyone in order to keep their good favor and opinion. However, professing her love for someone is a high gesture for Célimène – she has a hard enough time telling Alceste (whom she actually does love) that she loves him.

I wonder if she has given Oronte just enough to keep him happy, and he has taken these "honeyed words" further than they were intended. This would help fuel Célimène's surprise when Oronte asks her to choose between him and Alceste and offers her his hand and heart in Act V scene ii. This is a question I hope to answer in the coming rehearsals. On to the next.

Wednesday, August 26 (7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.)

The scenes we worked tonight are very challenging. Célimène is essentially being grilled from all sides, and although she intentionally constructed her demise, this does not make it any easier to sit through. First she is rejected by her cousin, Éliante, from whom she will get no help. Then she is bombarded by Acaste and Clitandre, who insist on presenting her “betrayal” to everyone. Meanwhile, Arsinoé sits behind her waiting to pounce, and Oronte is placed right in front of her so that his hurt and indignation are plain to see. The worst persecution, however, comes from Alceste.

While everyone else is up in arms against the reveal, Alceste and Célimène are having an underlying conversation. Célimène hopes desperately that Alceste will catch on to her hints to him underscored in the letter. She has no idea how he will react.

This scene presents a tall order technically as well. Célimène, again, stands and waits for everyone to finish their accusations before she responds. She doesn’t even get to defend herself to anyone. The choice that the letters were written to be exposed helps tremendously in this dilemma. Célimène doesn’t bother to defend herself, because she has scripted her own demise – socially, that is. She is patient and knows the importance of letting each person say their piece, even Arsinoé. Of course, she can build up and be continuously interrupted, but her motivation to speak up for herself can’t be too strong, or else she would.

Finally, when she has the chance to speak, she doesn’t defend herself, but gives the floor to Alceste to say anything he wishes. She lays herself open and vulnerable to what she expects will be a heated, aggressive scolding. The turn when she realizes that Alceste is not going to “hate” her and will actually forgive her becomes all the more powerful. This sets up a dying fall in the end.

Célimène actually says: “You have indeed good reason to hate me. Well then, hate me. I consent,” and Alceste responds with: “Ah! But can I, when you have deceived me so? Can I overcome all my feelings for you?” (Act V scene iv).

However, after Célimène makes the ultimate leap of faith in offering her hand to Alceste without him actually asking for it, Alceste says: “No! At this moment I hate you!” – the anger and reproach that Célimène expected all along. The fall becomes that much more powerful, because Célimène’s hopes are first raised before being crushed.

We worked mostly on blocking tonight in rehearsal. Now, I would like to spend time finding this moment in the end. I would also like to work on Célimène’s responses to the execution by sealing down actions for her to play without the text. She is dodging, tolerating, warning, placating, stilling, pushing, defending, etc.

I am listening intently to what my scene partners are saying, but it is a tricky situation, because Célimène already knows what the letters say – she wrote them. This moment requires a different kind of listening. I am simply focusing on remaining receptive and open to what my scene partners bring to the table. On to the next.

Friday, August 28 (7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.)

Tonight we made a lot of progress with Acts IV and V. I am having a hard time with a few moments, but the scenes as a whole are coming together. I am working on punching each action more clearly in the scene with Célimène and Alceste in Act IV.

Acts IV and V continue the witty banter that Célimène and Alceste enjoy in Act II, but the game soon becomes more serious than Célimène would prefer. Eventually, it gets too heavy and is no longer a game.

At this point I still have a lot of unanswered questions, but Célimène's journey is beginning to take its shape throughout the entire play. I plan to work on solidifying her choices and making sure that each scene contributes to her journey. Motivation works best with direction, and I want to make sure that Célimène's direction is consistent and clear.

Right now I also have a variety of actions for each moment, and I would like to work on narrowing these down to more specific choices. With that clarification in mind, I always like to give myself options for tactics, so that I can remain flexible and present to react to what my scene partner is giving me. On to the next.

Saturday, August 29 (2:30 p.m. to 4:15 p.m.)

I wish I was better with keeping up with my rehearsal journals. I've written down points, thoughts, questions, etc. for each rehearsal, but I haven't journaled as thoroughly as I would like.

Célimène has come a long way. I am working on finding the "human" side of her character. I want the audience to understand why Alceste is in love with her and to see it is more than a physical attraction between them. Célimène and Alceste love each other for their wits. They enjoy battling with one another more so than others, because they are each a good match for the other in terms of intelligence, quickness, and the art of argumentation.

Several discoveries have been made over the past week. I believe I have sealed down Célimène's part in the letters. We decided in the end there are definitely two letters – one written to Clitandre and one written to Acaste. Molière is not entirely clear on this part, but the motivations and questioning of each character seem to point in that direction. The question for Célimène is: Did she write the letters with the intention of them being discovered? In other words, did she know that Acaste and Clitandre would exchange letters, revealing her deception?

If she did not write them intentionally, she is literally caught red-handed. She has no excuse and no redeeming options other than that she simply wants everyone to like her. She is stringing her admirers along in order to keep their attentions, company, and favors; however, she can still have an arc. The climax (or ah-hah moment) of her arc would be when she confesses her guilt to Alceste and offers her hand to him.

The interesting thing to note here is that she never once apologizes to Alceste. If she did write the letters with the intention they would be discovered, the climax of her arc would come much earlier, before she sits down to compose the letters. She would have learned before then that her love for Alceste is worth losing her social status and the company of her admirers.

She then writes the letters knowing full well what it will mean for her social life. When is this learning moment? When does she make this decision? Also, why does she admit her guilt to Alceste instead of revealing her plan? Will he just think it's another excuse? Another ploy? Does she want to see if he will forgive her or how he will react? She knows if he cares, he will be upset.

The anger of the others I despised, but you I agree I have wronged.
(Act V scene iv)

I am tempted to think the letters were indeed written with a full and purposeful intention of being caught. On to the next.

Monday, August 31 (7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.)

I'm exhausted and am beginning to feel the pressure of impending deadlines, but rehearsal was productive nonetheless.

Tonight I wanted to work strictly on listening and reading my scene partner. David (Alceste) and I worked on Act II scene i, in which Alceste is scolding Célimène for allowing so many callers to hang around her.

This scene is vital, because it sets up the relationship between Alceste and Célimène for the rest of the play. In this scene, the audience will essentially decide whether or not they are going to root for the couple to succeed. If they don't see a deeper connection between Alceste and Célimène – if they think the attraction is merely physical – then the audience will not root for them. If that's the case, what's the point?

The audience must understand why Alceste loves Célimène. It's more than a superficial relationship. They are the only two who can hold their own with one another. They delight in the battle of the wits, in clever debates, and in one-upping the other with each challenging opposition. They love that they don't let each other off the hook and that they push one another to be better, smarter, quicker, etc.

While I felt a little low on energy in rehearsal tonight, this scene was better than it has been in the past. I can see that David (Alceste) and I are making discoveries together with our characters and the relationship between Alceste and Célimène. Director Hoover gave some excellent notes tonight that really helped to clarify this scene for me. I am looking forward to seeing where it goes from here.

As far as what I need to work on, I would like to be more receptive to my scene partners. I catch my mind wandering (often searching for my next line), and I am having a hard time

staying focused and present in the moment. I think a more thorough warm-up will certainly help with this – I seem to be carrying my day into the theatre each night, and that is never a good idea.

On to the next.

Wednesday, September 2 (7:30 p.m. to 9:20 p.m.) – Off Book Date

Tonight I got to play with Meghan (Arsinoé) which is always an exciting challenge. I know she is going to steal the show with her character, and I envy how deeply she is able to immerse herself into each moment. Honestly, it's a privilege to be able to work beside her.

We worked what I like to call the “bless your heart” scene in which Arsinoé comes to give Célimène some unsolicited advice. We tried it two different ways, and I found several new moments each time. First, we tried it with Célimène as rather cold, calculated, and unfeeling – her actions were to belittle, to chide, to stiffen, etc. Then we tried it with Célimène as apologetic, hesitant, and innocent – her actions were to console, to reach, to encourage, etc.

I think the second version is the stronger choice. It is the art of killing with kindness, which Célimène of course has mastered. This gives me a great turn at the end of the scene when Arsinoé stops the conversation outright, and Célimène sees that she has won. If she plays the win throughout the entire scene, this turn is lost.

This scene is very challenging, because it requires a great deal of listening. This is where my physical crutch tends to want to come out. When I am listening to monologues as long as Arsinoé's, it's difficult for me to literally sit still. I want to *show* her that I am listening and paying attention to her, causing my reactions to ring false. I want to let Meghan (Arsinoé) know I am with her. I need to trust my instincts and know that if I am truly listening, it will come through. On to the next.

Thursday, September 3 (7:45 p.m. to 9:45 p.m.)

I am reaching a new place with Célimène. I feel she is discovering new dimensions every night, and she is really beginning to take shape within the world of the play.

Tonight I was mostly focused on my motivations and stimuli, particularly with my monologue to Alceste in which I accuse him of having unwarranted suspicions and allow myself an unprecedented amount of vulnerability and exposure. For once, I am almost not keeping my cool.

I found some new colors in this monologue, and I am exploring different ways to change actions and tactics throughout without each turn being sharp and deliberate. I tend to waiver in extremes: either the monologue is all coming across as one note (as I have been told by Director Hoover) or else I feel false in navigating exaggerated actions and taking sudden turns with every sentence. Tonight, I feel I found the middle ground.

My answer, as always, lies in my scene partner. David (Alceste) is giving me a lot to play with, and in my opinion, we are working very well together. Our shared experiences allow us the freedom to play and trust one another on stage. I know that no matter what I throw at him, he can handle it – much like the relationship between Célimène and Alceste, it is a battle of wits.

At this point, I have scored my actions, established my blocking, memorized my lines, analyzed my character, tracked my arc throughout the play, and made choices regarding Célimène's physical and vocal qualities. I would like to focus more energy now on Célimène's situation and current circumstance. I have kept a keen awareness of the setting and given circumstances in the back of my mind, but I want to dig deeper into each scene.

I want to dig into what Célimène is thinking, feeling, wanting, fearing, etc. at each given moment. Of course, I think to put too much emphasis on emotional states (or any kind for that

matter) is dangerous, and one should always rely on the objective, actions, and motivations of the character; however, I'd like to get Célimène's hands dirty, so to speak, and take a closer look into who she is at this point. On to the next.

Friday, September 4 (7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.)

Tonight, the playfulness of the rehearsal process was emphasized in full force, which led to some interesting moments. It is important that the element of play is always present throughout the rehearsal process (as well as the run of the show). Productive, focused play is how magic moments are discovered.

Because of the scenes we worked tonight (Act V), I did not have much to explore in terms of lines, but my scene partners provided plenty to play with nonverbally. Tonight, our ensemble became stronger and more trusting as a result.

At this point, I would like to focus on Célimène's journey throughout the entire play. I have tracked her arc, and I want to make sure that it is clear and well-motivated. In addition, I want to make sure I am avoiding playing the ending of the scene, act, or play, so that Célimène truly goes on a journey from lights up to black out. Also, my hair is blonde! On to the next.

Saturday, September 5 (1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.)

I am finding that navigating this story through Célimène is requiring more and more energy each night. Today's rehearsal was very low energy, and most of the focus seemed to be on line memorization. I have memorized my lines, but can never be too confident. Lines should be cold and thorough – to the extent that muscle memory develops, and the mind can wander while still delivering the lines.

I run my lines every time I get in the car, and any time I'm doing physical activity, such as working in the scene shop, doing dishes, or working out. I also memorize my lines by singing or rapping them to break up the rhythm and avoid falling into line readings.

My lines came fairly smoothly today save for a couple of monologues in Act V that I am going to revisit. I found myself becoming impatient with my scene partners who were consistently having to stop and call for line. Perhaps it was because I was working on four hours of sleep – not my best decision.

I do not feel I was the best scene partner I could have been today. While I tried to keep my frustrations to myself, I was beginning to feel the pressures and anxieties of opening in less than two weeks. I need to trust my scene partners and know they will be ready to go on opening night, and instead of losing patience, I should look for ways that I can help to fuel the scene if a line is dropped. I hope my scene partners today did not pick up on my frustrations or take them personally – they are more so directed at myself than anyone else.

That being said, our first run-through was encouraging. I believe we are right where we need to be. With opening night fast approaching, we will be doing full runs from now on. I look forward to seeing how this continues to shape the story as a whole as well as Célimène's part in it. On to the next.

Notes for Saturday, September 5

Personal

- Find the way in which Célimène holds and handles props (cigarettes, champagne)

Directorial

- Lead Acaste downstage (Act II scene iv)
- Mihsyooohr (Act II scene iv)
- Sit further stage left on couch to allow room for Arsinoé (Act III scene iv)
- Clean up letter passing and snatching (Act IV scene iii)
- Find the balance between reality and the heightened world of the play (Act IV scene iii)
- Find moment and stimulus for hug with Éliante (Act V scene iv)

General

- Flying, popping, energy – the fun of the banter – this is what we live for
- Blast in on entrances – lights up
- Pick up cues
- Always move with purpose
- Set drinks further onto bar
- No handles – replace with sounds

Monday, September 7 (10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.)

Today we worked a scene that hasn't received much attention but is a very important part in the overall arc of my character: the landing. However, Célimène doesn't seem to land very well on her feet.

In the end, Célimène makes the difficult decision to lay it all out on the line and finally put down her defenses. She has been making steps towards this decision since the beginning, but it is still very difficult for her to take the leap of faith. She is able to do so after seeing that Alceste is able to forgive her "betrayal." I am still working out whether or not it was an actual or an intended betrayal.

With Alceste's forgiveness, Célimène allows herself to believe he really loves her as much as he has been professing, and she feels safe to admit her love in return. She goes so far as to offer her hand in marriage to reward him for his patience, persistence, and understanding. She fully expects, without a doubt, that Alceste will accept her proposal...and he doesn't.

This blow is too much for Célimène to process. We spent a little time on this moment of realization for Célimène. She wants to rebuff, to defend herself, perhaps even to retract. She wants the final word, if there has to be one, and she wants to win. Alceste's firmness and insistence show her that there is nothing she can say or do to change her circumstance. Even though she has accomplished what Alceste has been asking her to do all along, she loses the battle in the end. However, the end of the play suggests that perhaps the war is not quite over.

My goals in our run today were to stay open to my impulses and to find some more vocal variety – particularly in Act II scene iv in which Célimène is doing impressions of a number of different acquaintances. While I feel I made some great progress with this today, I still have a lot of work to do.

Overall, energy and patience were up significantly today in comparison with Saturday's run through. At this point, I would like to continue working to nail down the physical and vocal elements of Célimène.

I would also like to find a few more opportunities in the play to show her human side. If the audience does not connect with Célimène, they will neither appreciate nor understand the relationship between her and Alceste, and therefore, their final moments in the end will be superficial and meaningless. Without making every moment overly precious, this is something I would like to avoid. On to the next.

Notes for Monday, September 7

Personal

- Vocal variety from the start
- Find moments for Alceste during impressions (Act II, scene iv)

Directorial

- Great impressions, imitations (Act II scene iv)
- Philinte kisses Célimène's hand as greeting (Act II scene iii)
- Make Clitandre come down center to you (Act II scene iv)
- Take cigarette out of holder before putting it out (Act III scene iv)
- Punch "age and tastes" (Act III scene iv)
- Make feigned concern with Arsinoé more clear (Act III scene iv)
 - Célimène is irritated but not actually insulted
 - Make the choice and commit to it
- Defend yourself after Acaste finishes his letter to be interrupted by Clitandre (Act V scene iv)
- Hesitate – take a moment – before going to respond to Alceste before the exit (Act V scene iv)

Tuesday, September 8 (7:00 p.m. to 10:15 p.m.)

Tonight's was a productive rehearsal, but I can feel the exhaustion creeping in. I am having to push harder and harder to maintain my energy throughout the show. I can feel my stamina for the show is getting better, but my energy is lacking.

I want to dig further into Célimène's stakes. I believe this will help my energy by creating a higher sense of urgency in achieving my objective. What does Célimène have to lose or gain? What's at stake? I have considered this in terms of my overall arc and objective – my journey throughout the play – but I plan to take a closer look at her stakes alone. What does this story mean to Célimène?

I still have a lot of unanswered questions. My biggest one at this point is regarding the letters in Act V. I have decided that Célimène wrote the letters to Acaste and Clitandre intentionally, having overheard their conversation earlier about demonstrating proof of her affections to one another if they were to receive it. This gives Célimène an out. She can't simply shut off her social ties, but she does wish to rid herself of so many callers in order to open herself freely to Alceste. I'm not sure why she chooses to do so in such a finalizing and dramatic fashion – it seems to be her style.

My main question with the letters is about her confession of love to Acaste and Clitandre in each letter. I believe she does this because it is simply necessary in order to prompt them to exchange the letters. They are motivated to show one another the "proof" that she loves them; however, I'm not convinced this is enough. Something in the letters makes me feel she is really talking to Alceste and is hoping he will catch on.

Overall, I felt clearer and more grounded in rehearsal tonight, but my energy could use a good night's sleep. Since that's not likely in the cards, perhaps a raise in stakes will do the trick.

On to the next.

Notes for Tuesday, September 8

Personal

- Low energy
- Seal down impressions (Act II scene iv)
- Find voices
- Avoid squeaking – find places for power (Act IV No's)
- Play with cigarette holder – wand
- Build to explosive moments – don't ever sit at zero

Directorial

- “*More* champagne for the company” (Act II scene iv)
- Throw more daggers at Alceste (moments) during impressions (Act II scene iv)
- Did Acaste and Clitandre invite Arsinoé? (Act III scene iii)
- Mouth “sorry” to Alceste when closing doors for exit (Act III scene iv)
- Reaction to Alceste's rant is too casual – more listening (Act IV scene iii)
- Lose laughter with Alceste – begins build to explosive No's (Act IV scene iii)
- Operative words in monologue – honor, sex, passions (Act IV scene iii)
- Tear up letter as soon as you get it (Act IV scene iii)
- Come downstage right after marquis leave to open center for Oronte (Act V scene iv)
- Cheat out sooner with Alceste – “I'm in the wrong and I admit it.” (Act V scene iv)

Wednesday, September 9 (7:00 p.m. to 10:05 p.m.)

My goals for rehearsal tonight are to never be at zero – to maintain a higher urgency – and to listen honestly and openly to my scene partner(s) for the entire run. Today in class, I was given the note that what I am thinking and feeling is not always apparent in my face (though I’m not sure I always want it to be). I believe the answer to this lies in even closer listening. The predicament I run into, however, is when the character is trying to conceal what she is thinking and feeling – should she then be a bad liar and let it be known through her face that she is attempting to hide whatever it is she is really thinking? Perhaps my other goal is to leave the rest of my day out of rehearsal.

I feel I achieved my goal tonight of avoiding zero. While my energy and urgency were not exactly where they needed to be at all times, I can feel my stamina for the show as a whole becoming stronger. I did not feel I was having to “pick myself up” each time I went on stage as much as I did in our last rehearsal. I find that working out and doing anything I can to keep moving while off stage helps maintain energy, rather than sitting and watching the other scenes.

There are some specific points I would like to work further. I am finding it difficult to fit time in each day to work these moments on my own. Of course, I work them in the car, in the shower, running in between here and there, and any other time I can squeeze in to run lines or explore moments. Working on the go does not allow me to focus and explore as much as I would like to, unfortunately. Amongst teaching, working in the shop, classes, meetings, coordinating the Monday night showcase, Lakefront Players responsibilities, rehearsals and readings outside of class, and of course our rehearsals each night, I have very little opportunity to really sit and dig into a moment or monologue for long periods of time. This is not a complaint but simply the recognition of a challenge.

I do manage to squeeze the work in when and where I can. It is not a question of priorities. I am putting as much time, energy, thought, and effort into this role as I can afford, and I trust the work will come through. I am looking forward to the moment when it all comes together. On to the next.

Notes for Wednesday, September 9

Directorial

- Move out to open center for Oronte (Act V scene iv)
- Cut second cigarette before scene with Arsinoé (Act III scene iii)
- Be aware of higher pitches throughout
- Watch accent on “shall we sit *down*” (Act III scene iv)
- Mouth “sorry” – don’t actually say it (Act III scene iv)
- Tear up letter immediately so snatch letter earlier or tear up sooner (Act IV scene iii)
- Provide records
- Quicker exit in the end (Act V scene iv)
- Start considering/solidifying the shape and journey of the play
- The impressions game is getting good

Thursday, September 10 (7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.)

My goal for tonight is to get out of my head. The past few rehearsals I have felt distracted and unfocused, and while I would like to think I am always focused solely on my scene partner, I am afraid lately that has not always been the case. There are a number of reasons for this, none of which belong in the theatre.

Tonight's rehearsal was much better. I am still frustrated with some moments I have not been able to dig into as deeply as I would like, and those are being moved to the top of my priorities list, specifically Act II scene iv. I felt that Act IV scene iii, however, was much improved tonight. I spoke with David Brown (Alceste) about it afterwards, and he agreed. The scene felt much more lively, playful, and organic, if you will. I am excited to see where it goes from here.

While I have always struggled to free myself entirely from what I call the "judges" in my head, it seems they have been louder than usual throughout this rehearsal process. I believe the added layer of the thesis is weighing greatly on my mind. Of course I want every show I work on to be its best, and I always try to contribute what I can to a successful outcome; however, there is an additional pressure on this show. I am ever in fear of missed opportunities, missed moments, and missed ideas. Time is a factor, as well as energy – so much so that we are given the night off tomorrow night. I would hate to miss or neglect any opportunity to make this show the best that it can be.

Of course, I am also intellectualizing and analyzing this show thoroughly, as I do with every show, but again, with thesis in mind. I need to find a way out of my head – out of the thesis – and into the present moment.

Tonight I made some great progress in this direction. For the first time in several rehearsals, I felt playful and present. The “rut” that I was in is a normal part of the process, and hopefully, I am on the other side of it. The blocking is starting to feel natural and stimulated, and cues are being picked up with more energy and strategy. I feel my actions and tactics are becoming clearer and hope this is showing through in my work. I want to work with clarity, precision, commitment, focus, and energy. I believe the clearer I become with myself and Célimène, the clearer my choices will come through on stage.

Célimène had a breakthrough discovery tonight that is very exciting. While it did, admittedly, come in the middle of a scene, it was sparked by something that David Brown (Alceste) says in Act V scene iv:

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.

(Act V scene iv)

Earlier in the play (Act IV scene iii), Alceste tells Célimène he wishes misfortune might befall her so he can rescue her with his love. While this is a strange demonstration, Célimène takes it to heart, and perhaps, chooses to put it to the test. She writes her own misfortune through the letters she sends to Acaste and Clitandre, having overheard their plan to exchange proof of Célimène's affections should they receive it (Act III scene i). She constructs her own demise to present Alceste with the exact situation he wishes for: a rejected, belittled, humbled, and broken Célimène to be picked up and rescued by his honest love. It sounds dramatic, but then, Alceste is a little dramatic – perhaps that's what it takes.

However, Célimène fully expects Alceste to propose at that point and is shocked when he asks her to flee all of mankind and retreat into the wilderness to spend their lives together. While she has made a great journey in making herself vulnerable, open, and available to him, she can only tolerate to do so in the comfort of her world. This extreme is too much to ask. Besides, what would they have to banter about in the woods?

Célimène is crushed, of course, when Alceste rejects her proposition – the ultimate display of vulnerability and receptiveness. In the end, she sees there is no world in which the two of them can be together, and while she wants the final word, she gives it to Alceste as a parting gift. She knows nothing she can say will change her circumstance.

I loved finding this motivation for Célimène's writing the letters. It was invigorating and enlightening. It gives Célimène a depth I knew was there but was having a difficult time finding through Molière's very opinionated text. He has created a character who may be hard to love for the audience (if played a certain way) but who can come to life through her quest for courage, vulnerability, and a leap of faith if her human side is revealed. On to the next.

Notes for Thursday, September 10

Personal

- Get back to the scene partner – you are at your best when you are serving others
- Find hint to Alceste in each impression – throws

Directorial

- Come further downstage during impressions to make room for Basque to walk behind
- Pink Panther's Inspector Clouseau – French accent for one of the impressions
- "Go quickly and obey the summons" – go to Alceste downstage left (Act II scene iv)
- Find vocal varieties in antitheses – that but this (maybe accents or more impressions)
- You already have Arsinoé; have more fun playing with her (Act III scene iv)
 - Okay I'll play along with your little game even though I've already won
 - More feigned concern – go for it and enjoy it
 - You know exactly why she's here – toy with her
 - For your own entertainment
- Go get Alceste and bring him down center steps to Arsinoé – present (Act III scene iv)
- Changing angle with Oronte to more downstage left – hiding Alceste (Act V scene ii)
- Counter sooner with Alceste's cross to Philinte and Éliante (Act V scene iv)

Saturday, September 12 (10:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.)

Tech rehearsal is one of my favorite parts of the rehearsal process. The long hours are rough, and the pacing of the process is tedious, but tech rehearsal is when all of the elements of the show begin to come together – especially, the lights.

It is amazing what a difference the lighting in a show can make. For the past several weeks we have been rehearsing in a cold, harsh space with bright, examination-table lighting. Today, the scenes were brought to life. There is something invigorating and rejuvenating about this part of the process. Thus far, the setting has been a stage – a place for rehearsal. Today it became Célimène's parlor in Paris, 1965.

We began the day with a wet cue to cue – a moment-to-moment rehearsal for lights and sound – and finished with a complete run of the show. The cue to cue gave me time to run lines with a few of my colleagues, which is always helpful.

The run went well, though I had hoped for better. I experimented with a few different accents for the impressions scene, which I spent a good deal of time working during our night off last night (Friday, September 11) – particularly with learning a French accent. Thus far, I have worked on this scene but have not had the chance to really sit and play with it. At this point, I would like to polish the accents and clean up the physicality for each impression, but we have made a lot of progress with the scene as a whole.

David Brown (Alceste) and I also had some new and stimulating moments during the impressions scene. The note for Alceste to move around the room instead of remaining seated on the stairs throughout the entire scene was very helpful.

I am grateful that all of my scene partners seem to be maintaining a layer of play throughout each scene. While blocking and actions and costume and lighting and sound and cues

and entrances and exits and lines and motivations and reactions and props are vital to the success of the show, the underlying layer of play gives it life and keeps it alive. I am working to keep all of these aspects in the air while never forgetting to stay open and present in the moment. On to the next.

Notes for Saturday, September 12

Personal

- Comedy is based in reality
- Bring records for props
- Touch, laugh, breathe
- Active listening maintains energy and focus

Directorial

- Célimène is “baiting” Alceste as well as entertaining her guests (Act II scene iv)
- Characters in impressions scene were great – love the French one (Act II scene iv)
- Peanuts for Arsinoé – offer nuts to her and set on the coffee table (Act III scene iv)
- “Paying a call the other day” brings you up to upstage center window (Act III scene iv)
- Arsinoé is calling you a whore – don’t let it pass you – more reactive (Act III scene iv)
- Bring Alceste down to Arsinoé (Act III scene iv)
- Clear bar of glasses between Acts IV and V (after scene with Du Bois)
- Not sure about standing on table (Act II scene iv)

General

- Possible Friday student matinee (September 25 at 9:30 a.m.)

Sunday, September 13 (1:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.)

We are officially through tech rehearsals and into dress! I am a little anxious about a few pending elements, but I know they will come together when they will.

Rehearsal today was fun. The story really seems to be taking the shape of the whole play, rather than each individual scene standing alone – this weekend they were strung together. Célimène is still (and hopefully always will be) in development, and she made some new discoveries today as well.

My favorite discovery made today was a happy accident. During the impressions game (Act II scene iv), Célimène finishes her show with an impression of Damis, who bears a suspiciously similar description to Alceste. Célimène likes to stand on the table at the finale of this impression, but today she was given an opportunity that she simply could not resist. She noticed at the beginning of her Damis performance that Alceste was standing behind her on the center steps, folding his arms and observing her show with judgment and disgust. The final line of the impression reads:

...he'll just fold his arms and look down in pity from the height of his own wisdom on everything anyone says.

(Act II scene iv)

At this moment, she couldn't help herself from turning the jest on Alceste and mirroring his posture on the steps. It was a beautiful moment and a much stronger catalyst for Alceste's outburst that follows. It is moments like these that keep the play alive and moving. My goal at this point is to keep Célimène alive, moving, and developing throughout dress rehearsals and the run of the show by continuing to seek and take advantage of these opportunities.

I also found I was a much better listener today than I have been over the past week. Operative words were beginning to stand out to me, and I felt much more focused on the new

information that was being delivered rather than the larger mechanics of the scene. This is likely the result of a combination of elements coming together: lines, blocking, actions, cues, etc.

Dropping those attentions allows me to focus on the stimuli coming from my scene partner(s) and to react openly to those stimuli. This is when the magic happens. On to the next.

Notes for Sunday, September 13

Personal

- Vocal variety
- Work final monologue to Alceste (Act V scene iv)
- Storytelling – clear, operative words
- Arsinoé may drop peanuts down her shirt (Act III scene iv)

Directorial

- Maybe laugh cue for Alceste before entrance (Act IV scene iii)
- Come downstage further for Basque (Act II scene iv)
- Great arms folding mimic of Alceste (Act II scene iv)
- Throw letter more downstage so pieces don't go through the wall (Act IV scene iii)
- Arsinoé's entrance will be delayed – “you are surprised...” (Act V scene iv)

Monday, September 14 (5:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m.)

A lot of elements were added in tonight's dress rehearsal. The set is coming together, and new pieces are added each night. Costumes, hair, and makeup all came into play tonight as well. The world of the play is really starting to take shape. With all of these new stimuli, my goal tonight was to simply stay focused on the moment and actively listen to my scene partner. Overall, I felt tonight's dress rehearsal went really well.

I felt especially connected in my scenes with David Brown (Alceste) tonight. The first scene in which Célimène and Alceste are bantering about Célimène's frequent callers is essential to setting up the tone for the rest of the play. Even though it takes place thirty minutes in, it is the first time the audience gets a peek at Célimène and Alceste together. It is imperative that the audience understands why they work well together and what the attraction is between them. If this relationship is not understood and appreciated in this first scene, the audience will not root for them for the rest of the story.

I have been working to keep this scene as playful and light as possible while still doing justice to the text. Tonight I felt David (Alceste) and I were really working together to establish this dynamic, and I thoroughly enjoyed the freedom we both had in the scene.

Freedom is a tricky thing on stage. Throughout the rehearsal process, choices are made for the character and every individual move is planned out. Then, those choices and plans are worked over and over again until they are smooth, justified, and collaborative. Repetition and predictability are a vital part of the process. In the midst of all that, you must remain open, receptive, and free, if you will, to give and take with your scene partner(s). The playfulness that keeps the story fresh and honest night after night is sometimes buried beneath the layers of planning you have piled on in your preparation to play.

My goal now is to work to maintain that freedom in finding motivations for the choices and plans that have been made. On to the next.

Notes for Monday, September 14

Personal

- Keep the play
- Make sure your voice gets over the music
- Get a lighter shade of tights, eyeliner, and make-up removers

Directorial

- Put spilled nuts in the ashtray
- Don't shimmy when arguing with Alceste about Oronte (Act IV scene iii)
- Throw water in Alceste's chest so that it splashes in his face (Act IV scene iii)
- Be more startled when Alceste appears (Act V scene ii)
- "Solitude is a frightening prospect when you are *young*" (Act V scene iv)

Costume

- Smooth out hair in ponytail

Tuesday, September 15 (5:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.)

Tonight's dress rehearsal did not go as well as I would have liked. The entire night I felt exhausted and distracted. My goal tonight was mostly to survive.

I have found this is typical in the rehearsal process, and I actually prefer to have one dress rehearsal that is a little off. It allows the ensemble to get the hiccups out before opening night and helps the show to peak at the right time in the process. If every dress is perfect, I get nervous. It is nice to get a rough one out of the way before the audience comes in to play.

That being said, one rough dress rehearsal is plenty. I am hoping that tomorrow's rehearsal will go better to give everyone confidence going into Thursday night (September 17).

At this point, I would like to look over Célimène's final moments with Alceste in Act V as well as her scene with Arsinoé in Act III. I plan to meet with David (Alceste) and Meghan Shea (Arsinoé) to smooth over these scenes before tomorrow's dress rehearsal. On to the next.

Notes for Tuesday, September 15

Personal

- Clean up impressions – find voices again

Directorial

- Preload the cigarette holder while you are straightening for the guests to arrive (Act II scene ii)
- See if there is a nasal person in the group of impressions (Act II scene iv)
- Leave doors open on exit (Act V scene iv)

Wednesday, September 16 (5:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.)

Tonight's run was, in my humble opinion, the best it has been thus far. We have reached that lovely exhausted place where we are ready to open, and it seems another rehearsal would be too much. It can be hard to recognize that point in a rehearsal, because the temptation to work everything to perfection is strong; however, there comes a point when you have to let it go and trust in the work that has been done.

My goal for tonight was to bring a lot of energy to each scene, in lieu of last night's dress rehearsal. I am having to push myself harder and harder each night to stay energized physically, vocally, and mentally. This has nothing to do with investment in the production and everything to do with several weeks of fourteen hour work days.

For the most part, I succeeded in my goal. The most difficult scene to maintain energy throughout is the final scene with Alceste, Philinte, and Éliante (Act V scene iv). It is a small bump in the resolution taking place directly after the larger climactic moments of the play, and it is difficult to keep that sense of urgency when it seems that all is lost, especially after Alceste rejects Célimène's proposal.

I believe the energy in this scene is found in the newly heightened circumstances. The stakes are higher and therefore, there is a lot more to lose. This seems counterintuitive, because Célimène has already seemingly lost everything through her social demise, but the one thing she really cares about holding on to is still with her. She expects to lose that as well, but when Alceste says he intends to forgive her betrayal, a new energy emerges in Célimène – hope is on the horizon. This sets her up for an even harder fall when she discovers all is lost after all.

I felt best about Célimène's scene with Arsinoé tonight (Act III scene iv). Meghan (Arsinoé) provides a great challenge for me to work up to each night, and I have really enjoyed

working with her. Tonight, we were more connected than ever, and I honestly did not know who was going to win the scene. Textually, Célimène wins the scene after Arsinoé's outburst; however, Meghan (Arsinoé) always makes it a close battle. Célimène's scripted win does not automatically dictate Sarah Beth's win. I had so much fun with this scene tonight, and I attribute it to Meghan and I running through it on stage before rehearsal. Something about that brief warmup gave us the freedom to really let go and invest in each present moment, keeping the scene alive and keeping the scene partners on their toes. On to the next.

Notes for Wednesday, September 16

Personal

- Trust in your work

Directorial

- Throw the champagne at Alceste's neck – higher (Act IV scene iii)

Performance: Thursday, September 17 (5:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m.)

My goal tonight is to trust in the work that has been done and to have full faith in my scene partners.

I could not have asked for a better opening night. The audience tonight was energetic, invested, and surprisingly audible. The energy on stage was high, and I had complete faith and trust in my scene partners. Of course, there was an element of “playing it safe,” likely due to nerves and the introduction of an audience, but that is to be expected. The nerves, however, seemed to fuel a new energy, and rather than keeping a safe distance from the audience by being cautious towards play, I was proud to see everyone embracing the chance to go for it. I believe this can be credited to a strong, trusting ensemble and the knowledge that the time and effort have been given to prepare for this chance.

Admittedly, I did not entirely reach my goals tonight. I knew the work had been done, the time had been put in, and we were well prepared to open the show. It was difficult, however, for me to trust myself at first. In a performance, it is usually not until I get the first line out on stage that I am able to begin settling in. I wish I could settle in before this, but the added knowledge that anything can happen combined with the unpredictable energy of the audience is hard to ignore.

In addition, I’m afraid I did not fully trust my scene partners. During Act I, I was backstage seeing Eduardo pacing in and out of the scene shop to keep his energy up. I could not shake a nervousness every time I saw him that he was missing his cue to enter. I recognized this in the moment and was disappointed in myself for not giving him more credit.

I also had a moment in Act II with David (Alceste) when I thought he had skipped a line and briefly contemplated skipping ahead so we would get back on track. I told myself to get my

focus back onto my scene partner as fast as possible, and I'm glad I did, because it turned out that David (Alceste) had not skipped a line, and we were right on track. Again, I was disappointed in myself for losing focus, and I would like to work on allowing myself to wholeheartedly trust my scene partners.

I wonder though if the glitch with David (Alceste) was a lack of trust or simply a product of trying to stay on my toes, be ready, and pay attention. I would like to think that after working together for a couple of years that I trust David (Alceste) entirely – I certainly do not feel distrusting when we are on stage together. Perhaps it is more that I need to stay focused on the elements I can control and trust in the work we have done to get us through.

My scene with Meghan (Arsinoé) tonight was a blast. I felt focused, connected, and stimulated throughout the entire scene. The only times I noticed that my focus was beginning to wander were when we experienced unexpected audible responses from the audience. I was very surprised at just how vocal and invested the audience was – particularly with Arsinoé. The audience even gave a very audible “aww” after my line:

She makes great parade of her piety in devout circles, and yet she paints her face and tries to make herself look attractive.

(Act III scene iv)

I was momentarily distracted by this response, because it showed that the audience actually pitied Arsinoé and felt sorry for her. My immediate reaction was that I was being too mean and not “human” enough. The last thing I want is for Célimène to come across as inhuman, cruel, cold, bitchy, or conceited. Célimène, in this scene, is on the defense, and although she is playing with Arsinoé because she knows she can, she is not trying to be purely mean. She is trying to win. Although the text imposes that Célimène wins the battle against Arsinoé in that scene, I am afraid that tonight Meghan won for Arsinoé. Of course, the audience can pity

Arsinoé in these moments, and it works as long as they are still invested in Célimène. If they have no interest in rooting for or at least following Célimène, however, then the audience will check out and separate themselves from the resolution of the conflict.

I found my focus beginning to wander in this direction after the audible “aww” from the audience and immediately told myself to get back to Meghan (Arsinoé) and the present moment. Once on stage, it is not my job to worry about how the audience feels about my character. It is my job to be available to my scene partner and to stay present in moving the story forward moment by moment.

The unpredictability of live theatre is what attracts me most to the craft. I love the idea that anything is possible at any given moment and that you cannot say “cut” in the middle of it or edit the parts you want later. It is the electricity of the here and now. On to the next.

ACTF Response (Thursday, September 17)

The process is never over. Célimène will (ideally) always be in development, and discoveries will continue to be made. After the show, our American College Theatre Festival respondents gave some very helpful thoughts on both the performance and production elements.

Notes from Sarah Valentine and Eric Marsh (ACTF)

Overall

- Embrace your elevated entrances
- Italicize names because they are foreign
- Dialogue is fast, witty, and sharp – Molière
- Counter others' inflections especially in arguments
- Pull upstage from realistic to less realistic (set design) – reflects the fine line of a play that balances between reality and a heightened world
- Get the attitudes, but make sure they don't override the language – play is based in argument
- Dig deep into the language
- Translation and social commentary make it difficult
- Heels for Célimène instead of wedges
- "Home" – ways to clarify Célimène's house as the setting
- Have a curiosity about the specificity of language and take nothing for granted
- Why is it written this way? Personal example: "Don't pester me..."
- Energy during imitations – carry into the rest of the play – room, group energy
- Don't get too casual – stay heightened in the world
- Watch balance between high character and understatements
- Relationship between Célimène and Marquis – what is their expectation? What is their end game? Does Célimène know their endgame? Does she know she's a beard?
- This is a world of recognizable societal characterizations
- Actor's job is to come up with business that is crafted, clear, and tells a story for the audience's benefit (Meghan's peanut eating)
- Play up rather than down – no lighting on floor and steep house structure
- Acting is technical and everything you do is telling a story
- Intention comes from knowing what you're saying and why you are saying it
- Inciting incident – dramatic action – climax
- Climax should answer the question of the inciting incident
- What is the dramatic question of the play?
- Old stasis to new stasis
- Make sure energy during and after the climax is even higher – don't get too casual
- Find out why the repetitions are not actually repetitions – what's different?
- The answer to repetitions may lie in the other person. You know what I mean?
- Follow the thread of the argument

Célimène

- Have the glass more full when thrown in Alceste's face to make it more visible
- Make window play more clear
- Argument with Alceste – voice – where does anger come from?
- Take your stand in this moment (Act IV scene iii)
- At what point does she get really pissed?
- Where is the climax of the argument?
- Make drink splash a final “fuck you” rather than a runaway move – Oh, and fuck you – boom.
- Not a little blonde girl throwing a tantrum – she has a valid right to take her stand
- Final moment “apology” to Alceste came across as clear and sincere
- Impressions were clear and well-crafted. Do even more.

Performance: Friday, September 18th (5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.)

Tonight's performance did not have nearly as much energy as last night, and I felt I was having to work much harder to maintain a high urgency throughout the show. Nonetheless, I thought the performance went well.

I fear we were spoiled by such an invested, audible, and energized crowd on Thursday night. Adrenaline was high, because it was opening night. There was a new tension in the air that comes with the introduction of a live audience, and that audience was incredibly participatory. All of this combined to create an electric atmosphere throughout the performance.

Tonight it seemed we were a little deflated, likely due to exhaustion. Everyone was kept later than usual with the ACTF response after the show, and while the response was productive and cordial, it did seem to deflate the energy to a degree. The process of having someone come observe the show and tell you afterwards all the things you should have done differently but it's too late to change is not ideal. It would be more productive if the respondents could attend a few rehearsals three weeks before the run of the show, then possibly a dress rehearsal, and a final night of the performance – I realize, of course, this requires a lot more. The critique, in that case, could be an ongoing conversation capped with a post mortem analysis.

I was surprised to see the exhaustion so early in this run. I could feel it in myself and sense it in my colleagues. We were pushing hard throughout the entire show, but the effort was hard to ignore. Everyone seemed oddly uneasy and on edge tonight. I am hoping that a good night's sleep and the added comfort of having performed in front of two very different audiences will help us to start fresh and rejuvenated tomorrow night.

In spite of the exhaustion, I felt well-connected with my scene partners tonight. Perhaps it is due to a heightened dependence on them to keep the scene alive and moving. It is very much

like the children's game, Keep It Up, in which you try to keep a partially deflated balloon from touching the ground while passing it to your fellow players – the more deflated the balloon is, the harder it is to keep it up.

While the majority of the rehearsal process is spent learning lines, establishing blocking, working with set, props, and costumes, finding motivations, clarifying actions, etc., a large part of the process (for myself) is building relationships with my colleagues that will allow us to lean heavily on one another when necessary. Particularly in an ensemble piece, a willingness to be open, to depend on and to trust one another is a vital function. I feel I could have invested more time and energy into this aspect of the process, but I am grateful for an excellent, hardworking cast and crew that I can lean on.

I took the note from the ACTF respondents about throwing the champagne in Alceste's face (Act IV scene iii). The thoughts from Sarah Valentine on this moment excited me, because they aimed to show more of Célimène's valid, human side – something I have struggled to maintain with the text. Sarah advised me to take my stand in that moment. Célimène is not throwing the champagne as an afterthought, as an escape from the situation, which was apparently how it was reading. The throw is a final stand for Célimène. When she stands strong in that moment, she appears more as a woman who is right in her cause rather than a whining brat throwing a tantrum.

I attempted to make this adjustment by sticking around to see Alceste's face after I threw the champagne at him. It felt empowering and much clearer than before. Célimène is an intelligent person and has no doubts about her side of the argument. She holds her own in this moment with Alceste by standing up for herself and pointing out the faults in his accusations. I

enjoyed playing with new motivations behind throwing the champagne and felt the result was a much stronger choice.

At this point, I would like to work on keeping my energy up throughout the show and making sure each moment is clear and precisely crafted. As always, I plan to work to keep my focus on my scene partner(s) at all times, but I would also like to make a point from here on to try not to judge myself so harshly when my focus wanders. I have a tendency to criticize myself when I notice that I am not listening as actively as I should be or when I am distracted by something other than my scene partner. This, of course, distracts me further, and the vicious cycle of judgment begins – a spiraling destruction that is very hard to control once it begins.

When specific thoughts enter the mind in meditation, you acknowledge those thoughts and allow them to drift in and out as they will without judgment. You do not try to push the thoughts out of your mind but simply let them go and direct your focus back where it belongs – it is easier said than done. My goal is to apply this same concept on stage, so that thoughts and distractions actually have less impact on my focus than if I try to attack them directly.

I have reached a point in my process where it is important to me that I trust in my work and focus on staying present in the moment with my scene partners each night. This process has been enlightening, invigorating, and rejuvenating. My work off stage will now take the form of reflection and self-analysis. On to the next.

CHAPTER 7

Artist Evaluation

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.

The Misanthrope, Act V scene iv

SELF ANALYSIS

Overall, *The Misanthrope* was a successful production. While there are a number of things I would like to have explored more thoroughly, it is important to remember that the process never actually ends. There is no final point when one can say a show is ready, finished, or perfect. There is a point, however, when a show can become over-intellectualized and lose its spice. The right amount of exploration and rehearsal for a show is entirely dependent on the production, the cast, and the crew. *The Misanthrope* hit its peak at just the right time. I would like to have had the time to dig deeper into some specific moments, but it's possible that deeper digging would have tainted the production with an imbalance between analysis and play.

The Misanthrope Musings

I have a tendency to analyze a piece to death; for me, the scales of intellectual and organic play tend to lean heavier on the intellectual side. That being said, I made a point to stay out of my head as much as possible during this process – particularly in rehearsal – and left the cerebral elements to be worked through outside of the theatre. This helped me immensely in the way I rehearsed and performed. I was more playful and more open in rehearsals at an earlier point in the process than with previous productions. I have approached rehearsal in the past with a healthy level of analysis – always looking for something – and it seems the difference in my approach for this production resulted in a higher focus on my scene partner and each individual moment.

This is, however, a small step. I could have done more to maintain this focus and remain present with my scene partner(s) throughout the entire process. My first goal in every production is to be a good scene partner for my colleagues. This means to be present, to be prepared, to be

giving, to be open, and to be playful. This is the first thing I remind myself to do when entering a performance.

Throughout the rehearsal process, I felt highly focused and present in most of our rehearsals. There were a few occasions when the rest of the day would sneak in to the theatre, but for the most part, I was able to set those distractions aside for the hours we were working each night.

The plain truth is that life has become so crowded, so hurried, so commonplace, so ordinary, that we have lost the artist's approach to art.¹⁴

Nonetheless, there were many moments in rehearsal when I found myself in my head and out of the moment. The analytical voices in my head would start to chime in – judging my choices and wandering into parts of the script that were not immediately relevant to the moment. I call these voices “judges” and will refer to them as such for the remainder of this analysis. I call them “judges” because that is essentially what they represent in my head. I judge myself, I judge my work, I judge my performance, I judge others – the voices in my head are constantly analyzing and making judgments on every given stimuli around me at the time and often on stimuli of which I am unaware. As much as I would like to quiet these judges, it is far easier said than done.

There were a few beautiful moments in rehearsal when I felt entirely present with my scene partner(s), and my judges did not have much to say. This does not necessarily mean I approved of each of my choices or my performance – judges can be positive or negative – but that I was so intently focused on the present moment that whether my judges were speaking up or not, I did not acknowledge them. I have only experienced that true, living, focused presence a handful of times, and they have been some of the most freeing and exhilarating moments of my

life. Those moments have been few and fleeting. Having had a taste, I am ever seeking to get back to that place of heightened human existence with another.

Ideally, of course, every minute would take place in this state of mind and body. Most of my time on stage, in rehearsal and performance, exists in the place right below that heightened existence. I am focused, I am present, and I am playful; however, there is something that is not quite connecting. I am either being influenced by my judges, distracted by my environment, or hindered by any number of internal and external stimuli that do not involve my scene partner or the present moment. It is still a beautiful place to reside, and I can feel I am reaching and nearly accessing that next level of present awareness. This attempt – this place of “almost” – can be immensely frustrating, but it is indescribably satisfying when I access a piece of the ideal, however fleeting it may be.

There was one moment in particular I can remember getting a glimpse. During the Sunday matinee on September 27, David (Alceste) and I were a little over halfway through the final performance of *The Misanthrope*. In Act IV scene iii, Alceste and Célimène’s argument is interrupted by Du Bois who enters to tell Alceste that they must “decamp.” When I did not see the door open on my last line, I looked at David (Alceste) and could see he knew exactly what had happened: Du Bois had missed his entrance. Fortunately, Célimène had a lot more she wanted to say.

David and I improvised the remainder of the scene for nearly two minutes on stage before we were interrupted by Du Bois. While missed entrances are never ideal, I was grateful for the opportunity to play and to flex a muscle that is often neglected. I remember a few judges popping up during our improvisation including: How long will we need to go? Where is he? What else can we talk about? Where does this scene go from here?

For the most part, however, I was pleasantly surprised to discover that my judges did not jump to the forefront of my mind and my focus remained entirely on David (Alceste) and the present moment. This can likely be attributed to the fact that we were one another's lifelines in that moment, and one's focus is automatically heightened in that circumstance. Regardless, I was relieved to find a sense of play still remained in the midst of the chaos. Neither one of us knew what would happen next or how long we would have to keep the ball in the air, but we were both invested in the goal and determined not to let it fall. More importantly, there was an unwavering trust between us that can only be established through the rehearsal process.

In these brief moments, I remember listening intensely to David (Alceste), responding honestly and openly to the stimuli he was giving me, and working with a focused energy to give him what he needed in return. The lifeline for us was not simply in one another but in our individual objectives in the scene. Célimène's objective, essentially, is to win the argument, to put Alceste in his place, and to take her stand. She does that during the monologue in which she throws the champagne in Alceste's face, but he comes back with a statement she never fully gets to respond to because she is interrupted by Du Bois. This was Célimène's chance to respond and continue the argument without letting Alceste off so easily.

Having a clear objective in this scene gave me a motivation and destination when the time called for it. I did not have to worry about what was happening backstage or running out of material as long as I stuck with my objective and remained present with my scene partner. I also trusted David (Alceste) in this situation to make achieving my objective a challenge, so we each had something for which to fight. If one of us had simply said: "yes, you're right," the scene would have ended immediately, and we would have had nowhere to go. Because we were both

determined to achieve our individual objectives and to not let the other “win,” the scene was able to continue moving forward. We did not have to drop everything and talk about the weather.

This was not the first missed entrance during a performance. Earlier in the week, an entrance was missed in Act II scene i, and David (Alceste) and I ended up in the exact same situation – communicating with one another and surviving off of trust and play. Something, however, was different during this improvisation. This could be due to a number of things: this was the first time in the run of the show this had happened, and it was the first time for David (Alceste) and I to experience this kind of circumstance together. This was also in one of the earlier performances, so everyone was not as settled into their roles as they were during the Sunday matinee on September 27.

Even so, I felt focused and playful, and my objective for the scene was clear and decided. The difference for me rested in the stakes of the scene. In Act IV scene iii, the stakes for Célimène are very high – she has a lot to gain by obtaining her objective and a lot to lose if she fails. In Act II scene i, however, the banter between Alceste and Célimène is more playful and relatively harmless. For Célimène, it is less about taking a stand and more about appeasing and baiting Alceste. Because the stakes for the scene were not as high, it was much more difficult to keep the scene moving forward and to maintain a heightened sense of reality. This improvisation also did not last as long as the other (about one minute), so there was not as much time to push the scene forward or find a new dialogue.

It would have served my character and my performance to raise my stakes for the entire journey of the play. I did my best to perform with a sense of urgency and energy each night, but it became more and more difficult to maintain that energy throughout each performance, and my sense of urgency should have been higher. Célimène’s inner fire dwindled in places, making her

choices less clear and less motivated. However, the heightened stakes in Act IV scene iii drove Célimène to work toward her objective with precision, urgency, and a burning drive. I would like to have carried this drive throughout the entire performance night after night.

There were a few other moments over the run of the show where I was able to tap into that higher level of focus and play. The one that stands out to me the most – but did not involve any improvisation – took place in Act III scene iv with Célimène and Arsinoé.

Meghan (Arsinoé) was a consistently lovely scene partner throughout rehearsals and performances. I admired her ability to always make new discoveries, and I appreciated her playfulness. Célimène's main objective in this scene is to put Arsinoé in her place and to let her know she can play the game as well. Ultimately, Célimène wants to “win” the scene, no matter what.

I looked forward to playing this scene with Meghan (Arsinoé) each night. One of the biggest challenges these moments presented to me revolved around listening. My judges tended to become a little louder during this scene, likely because Meghan (Arsinoé) delivers some impressively long monologues. If I wasn't listening intently and essentially hanging on to every word Meghan (Arsinoé) said, I was going to check out of the scene. I first battled this by repeating words or phrases from Meghan (Arsinoé) as she said them. It helped me to keep my focus on her and constantly reminded me to evaluate everything she was saying to me. Even though I am hearing it for the twentieth time, Célimène is hearing it for the first time, every time.

This is a difficult balance to find, because Célimène certainly does not want to appear to be hanging on Arsinoé's every word. At times she may fake interest and concern, but she already knows why Arsinoé is here and where her actual endgame lies – in Alceste. I did find, however, that repeating Meghan's (Arsinoé's) lines and asking myself questions about those lines as she

spoke was very helpful in keeping my mind focused and full during her monologues. If nothing else, this practice prevented my judges from being able to chime in and take over.

During Act III scene iv of the Sunday matinee on September 27, I reached that ideal state of play with Meghan (Arsinoé). Again, I believe this was largely due to my character having a clear objective for the scene and a burning urgency to get what she wants. I also believe this was due to the trust and familiarity between Meghan and myself. I can say I had some of the most fun I've ever had on stage during this scene with Meghan (Arsinoé) in the Sunday matinee, and I am grateful to her for providing a continuously elusive challenge to “win” the scene.

Strengths

Vocal Work

While I still have a lot of work to do in sharpening my vocal abilities, I came a very long way during the course of this show. My goal throughout the rehearsal process was to never get a note from Director Hoover regarding my accent (Southeastern United States). Through all of the rehearsals, I only received one. My southern accent had slipped out in a rehearsal on the word “down” in Act III scene iv.

I also feel I stretched my vocal abilities more in this show than I have before. In Act II scene iv, Célimène performs several impressions for her guests. She is mimicking people they know in their society in a comedic, exaggerated way simply for the purpose of entertaining her friends (and irritating Alceste). This scene provided a variety of vocal challenges for me. My goal was to explore all the facets of vocal possibility through these impressions, especially with resonances and accents.

Act II scene iv – The Impressions Scene: Vocal Choices

Damon: French, chest resonance

Timante: Spanish, soft palate/head resonance

Géralde: English, lower diaphragm resonance

Bélise: English, upper head resonance

Adraste: British, nasal resonance

Cléon: Neutral American, teeth resonance

Damis: English, chest/head resonances

While I believe I could have sharpened the accents I chose for each impression and cleaned up the resonances, I was happy (though never satisfied) with how far I pushed myself for this scene while keeping an eye on diction and articulation. I am grateful for the opportunity to explore these facets and for my newly discovered French accent.

Clarity

The amount of script work and analysis involved in this process contributed to a consistent and hard-earned clarity. As an actor, the clearer one is with one's self, the clearer one will come across on stage.

The way you speak to yourself is the way you will act. If you are clear, specific, and strong with yourself, then, chances are that that is how you will be onstage. An action must be *specific*. Stanislavsky said, 'Generality is the enemy of all art,' and nothing could be truer.²⁰

Clarity is one of the primary elements I am constantly pushing for my students (Acting I), and I was determined to do the same for myself, especially knowing they would be in the audience. While the audience, ideally, should have very little involvement in influencing the work on stage, knowing that my students were in the audience night after night gave me a new motivation to set a good example for them. In class discussions after the close of the show, I was

²⁰ Bruder, Melissa, et al. *A Practical Handbook for the Actor*. New York: Vintage, 1986. Print.

pleased to hear that they could indeed see the dramatic differences clarity can have on a performance.

There were certainly places in the script I could have been clearer in my choices. I believe clarity works both ways – in understanding the character and circumstance in order to better support one’s choices and in communicating those choices clearly to an audience. One must exercise the first in order to achieve the second. While I was very thorough in supporting my choices with script and character analysis, there were a few moments that did not fully become clear to me until partway through the run of the performances. A moment in particular that never really gained clarity took place on the line: “...as long as you don’t pester me with it any more,” (Act IV scene iii). Overall, however, my analysis of the script helped me to justify each choice with a firm decision and provided clarity for Célimène’s choices and motivations throughout the play.

Play

I maintained a strong sense of play throughout the rehearsal process and the performances. Of course, I tried to always make sure the play was focused and productive, and for the most part, it was. I believe a measure of productive play is vital to the life of a show. When the playfulness is lost, the truth of the moment is lost. One cannot be fully present and open without a willingness to play.

In everyday life, ‘if’ is a fiction, in the theatre, ‘if’ is an experiment. In everyday life, ‘if’ is an evasion, in the theatre, ‘if’ is the truth. When we are persuaded to believe in this truth, then the theatre and life are one. This is a high aim. It sounds like hard work. To play needs much work. But when we experience the work as play, then it is not work anymore. A play is play.²¹

²¹ Brook, Peter. *The Empty Space*. New York: Touchstone, 1968. Print.

I very much appreciated my scene partners' willingness to play, as well. This atmosphere of trust, focused presence, and play contributed immensely to the success of the production and to a delightful experience.

To Improve

Vocal Work

I consider the vocal progress I made over the course of this work to be a strength; however, I recognize I still have a lot of work to do in that arena. Célimène had a tendency to drift into the higher registers (head resonance), especially when she was flustered. I constantly reminded myself to bring her back down to a lower register (chest resonance), but despite my efforts, I could not keep her there.

There were points in the script when I made a specific choice to give Célimène a higher voice, but there were several points in performances those choices bled into other moments, and I struggled to return to a chest resonance afterwards. This was especially difficult during Act IV scene iii, in which Célimène is defending herself against Alceste's accusations. I made a specific choice on lines such as "No, I'll do no such thing," and "No, it was written to Oronte," (Act IV scene iii) to punch the "no's" in a higher head resonance. This helped me to cut Alceste off and get his attention. It was also a little mocking of Alceste, because he chose to jump into that same head resonance on lines such as "Yes, yes indeed!" and "What!" (Act IV scene iii). Unfortunately, it was very difficult for me to bring Célimène back to a chest resonance for her ensuing monologue.

A number of factors contributed to this challenge. Célimène, in this moment, is getting more and more flustered – a very difficult place to be in a chest resonance. She has a long

monologue to Alceste defending herself and accusing him of distrust through a series of questions that build to an eventual explosion.

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?

(Act IV scene iii)

To help myself stay in a lower register, I could have started in a lower register, so the build to the explosion ends in a lower register as well. If I start at ten, I must end at twenty, but if I start at five, I can end at ten. Also, more support from my diaphragm throughout this monologue would have helped me tremendously. Towards the end of the explosion, I always felt I was almost gasping for air. While I chose specific places to breathe in the monologue, I did not allow myself a full, deep, supported breath to carry me through. This would have helped me stay in a lower register while still projecting. I have learned it is much easier for me to project in a higher register than a lower one without the support of breath.

Trust

It is clear in my rehearsal journals that I did not fully trust my fellow scene partners to the extent I could have. This is not a comment on them, their abilities, or their experiences. This is a personal issue. Perhaps more time together or more relationship development in and out of rehearsal could have made the difference. Because this was my thesis production, I was often focused on other elements of the process rather than on my relationships with my colleagues. I

recognized this very late in the rehearsal process and made an attempt to redirect my energy during rehearsals (when I was not working on stage, of course). I reached a healthy level of trust with each cast member by the Sunday matinee on September 27, but I would have liked to have reached this point before opening night.

Physical Work

I made a point to limit the amount of physical work I focused on with Célimène to keep myself from hiding beneath the physical and to expose myself to other facets of her character. I am a very physical actor and am always tempted to jump to that element of the process before exploring others.

That being said, I could have clarified some of Célimène's physicality. Some of her physical choices: the way she holds a champagne glass, her dominant hand, the way she smokes a cigarette, the way she walks, stands, sits, and leans, her gestures, habits, and greetings were somewhat residual rather than specific and purposeful. I could have done more to make Célimène's movements clearer and more intentional.

Final Thoughts

There are plenty of aspects of my performance that could have been better honed, further explored, and more precisely executed. Most of them delve into a lack of clarity or an interference from my judges. It is difficult for me to pinpoint my strengths without finding elements that could have been better. It is also difficult for me to pinpoint my weaknesses without finding justifications for them.

As I said before, a performance is never complete – it is never a whole, finished product. The beauty and thrill of the theatre is in its constant movement. The theatre is a place of change, risk, and possibility that can only be fully embraced after the work has been done. Knowing the

work had been done, I was able to trust in it and let it go when the time came. This is my ultimate goal. Faults and findings will fall where they will. My only power is in my ability to recognize them, carry that recognition into my future work, trust in the progress made, and let it go again.

...the theatre is always dying and always being reborn, Pheonix-like, at the very moment when we have finished conducting the funeral service over its ashes.¹⁴

POST MORTEM

The University of New Orleans Theatre department held a Post Mortem for their production of *The Misanthrope* on Friday, October 23 at 2:00 p.m. in the Robert E. Nims Theatre. The Post Mortem followed the Critical Response Process created by Liz Lerman in her book, *Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process: A Method for Getting Useful Feedback on Anything you Make from Dance to Dessert*²² and was led by Diane Baas. The steps to the Critical Response Process include (1) Statements of Meaning, (2) Artist as Questioner, (3) Neutral Questions, and (4) Permissioned Opinions.

A variety of topics were explored during the Post Mortem, ranging from set design to lighting to costumes to the actor's journey. One question in particular sparked a lively discussion surrounding the balance between heightened reality and human reality.

With a classical text such as Molière's *The Misanthrope*, there is a demand for a larger, more extreme world. Molière creates characters that lean heavily on the heightened side of the spectrum – they are almost caricatures – extreme, saturated versions of people we encounter in everyday society. They are not flat, though it is easy to assume so simply from reading the text. A healthy amount of analysis and exploration is necessary in bringing these caricatures to life.

The challenge lies in finding the human in these extreme characters without losing the higher, larger world of the play. The elements of vocal variation and physical gestures were used as examples. Molière's text is heightened in itself – literally the words alone present each character in a saturated light. Does one choose to let the words speak for themselves to create the caricature and play it as straight and *humanly* as possible? Or does one pile on “over-the-top” vocal and physical qualities to add to the heightened effect? It is a choice between the eye and the ear: if the audience is not listening closely, they will miss the character in a classical text;

²² Lerman, Liz and John Borstel. *Critical Response Process*. New York: Dance Exchange, Inc., 2003.

however, one does not want to take away from the text by overwhelming the audience's eye with extreme physicality.

Of course, the answer lies in the balance. The actor must find a way to support the language with vocal and physical elements without choking it. It is also necessary to find the build of these elements and allow them to take the arc of the character's journey.

Maintaining this balance while keeping Célimène human presented another challenge. What makes a character human to the audience? What makes a character human to the actor? It was not my goal to create a character the audience would like or who was morally flawless – that wouldn't be any more human than a one-dimensional caricature. It was my goal to create in Célimène a character who had justifications and motivations for her choices. These are what make a character human – a want and a reason for their actions.

This is the starting point. Once the character's journey is fueled by incentives, stimuli, and an overarching goal, the other, more heightened elements can be layered on top. Of course, this human foundation can become buried under the character's more immediate attributes, but high stakes and a clear objective will ensure it is not lost, as long as every choice is made with the foundation in mind.

With all of these layers, it is easy to get lost in analysis and preparation – where to stand, what to say, how to look, what to think. This work builds to a full performance, but it cannot on its own create the final necessity: the truth of the moment. This truth – an open, focused presence – comes from trusting in the work leading up to the moment. Ultimately, one must trust that the moment *itself* is worthwhile, just as it is.

Several other questions were explored during the Post Mortem. Notes from the discussion are as follows. Please note that these thoughts involve a wide variety of responders and do not directly reflect my personal experience or opinion.

Post Mortem Notes: October 23, 2015

- Bar raised to show up ready to find something new
- Molière – talking, words, philosophy
 - Rallied around the challenge of Molière – Rise to the occasion
 - Process of understanding – What are we talking about?
 - After understanding, the fun can begin – There should be a connection first
- Some caricatures could be pushed further
 - Absurd, over-the-top, saturated characters
- How big can each person be and still make the show enjoyable and meaningful?
 - Eyes and ears – Mix between character (voice, movement) and words
 - Not commedia anymore – How do you make it work today?
 - Is the human quality necessary?
 - Balance between character and human
- Audience: Should dislike Célimène but couldn't completely
 - Chose path of redeeming quality in the end
 - Curious to see if I could completely hate her if she were played differently
 - End speech to Alceste: Could be a fuck you moment – Then she would be hated
 - Instead, the speech felt considered with real thought going on
- Challenge: Combining disjointed moments (present) with overarching whole
- Find the human first and then add on character layers
- May have better ending if Alceste and Célimène were completely unlikeable
- Want audience to think about their own lives
- Did you find Célimène's justifications for you or for the audience?
- The effect of set on process and performance
 - Good response
 - Took away some stage business as words began to take on meaning
- Still felt rushed in process, premature choices
 - Found some answers in the final show
 - Maybe two more weeks of rehearsal would benefit
- When do you *really* start working and digging?
 - It's not enough just to get through blocking and lines
 - Just because you know the steps, doesn't mean you know the dance
 - Time to marinate, fail, experiment, trial and error
 - Must have time to dig
 - Can you *make* the show peak for the deadline?

APPENDIX I

Production Resources

If all men were righteous, all hearts true and frank and loyal,
what purpose would most of our virtues serve?

The Misanthrope, Act III scene iv

SCENE BREAKDOWN¹⁹

ACT I: PARIS CÉLIMÈNE'S PARLOR 1965 CHARACTERS:	SCENE 1	SCENE 2	SCENE 3
ALCESTE In love with Célimène	ENTER		EXIT AT END
PHILINTE Alceste's friend In love with Éliante	ENTER		EXIT AT END
ORONTE In love with Célimène		ENTER Prop: Oronte's Poem	EXIT

ACT II: Paris, Célimène's Parlor 1965 CHARACTERS:	SCENE 1	SCENE 2	SCENE 3	SCENE 4	SCENE 5	SCENE 6
ALCESTE In love with Célimène	ENTER					
CÉLIMÈNE In love with Alceste	ENTER			FURNITURE: Chairs for the company (To Basque)		
BASQUE Célimène's manservant		ENTER				EXIT
ÉLIANTE Cousin to Célimène				ENTER		
PHILINTE Alceste's friend In love with Éliante				ENTER		
ACASTE A marquis				ENTER		
CLITANDRE A marquis				ENTER		
OFFICER Of the court of the Marshals of France						ENTER

ACT III: Paris, Célimène's Parlor 1965 CHARACTERS:	SCENE 1	SCENE 2	SCENE 3	SCENE 4	SCENE 5
CLITANDRE A marquis	ENTER (Remain on stage from Act II)			EXIT	
ACASTE A marquis	ENTER (Remain onstage from Act II)			EXIT	
CÉLIMÈNE In love with Alceste		ENTER			EXIT
BASQUE Célimène's manservant			ENTER	EXIT	
ARSINOÉ Friend of Célimène				ENTER	
ALCESTE In love with Célimène					ENTER

ACT IV: Paris, Célimène's Parlor 1965 CHARACTERS:	SCENE 1	SCENE 2	SCENE 3	SCENE 4
ÉLIANTE Cousin to Célimène	ENTER		EXIT	
PHILINTE Friend of Alceste In love with Éliante	ENTER		EXIT	
ALCESTE In love with Célimène		ENTER PROP: A letter		EXIT AT END
CÉLIMÈNE In love with Alceste			ENTER	EXIT AT END
DU BOIS Alceste's manservant				ENTER EXIT AT END

ACT V: Paris, Célimène's Parlor 1965 CHARACTERS:	SCENE 1	SCENE 2	SCENE 3	SCENE 4
ALCESTE In love with Célimène	ENTER			EXIT DURING SCENE
PHILINTE Friend of Alceste In love with Éliante	ENTER	EXIT	ENTER	
ORONTE In love with Célimène		ENTER		EXIT DURING SCENE
CÉLIMÈNE In love with Alceste		ENTER		EXIT DURING SCENE
ACASTE A marquis				ENTER EXIT DURING SCENE PROP: Letter
CLITANDRE A marquis				ENTER EXIT DURING SCENE
ARSINOÉ Friend of Célimène				ENTER EXIT DURING SCENE
ÉLIANTE Cousin to Célimène			ENTER	

SCENE BREAKDOWN BOARD

PERSONNAGES	I 1	I 2	I 3	I 4	I 5	I 6	I 7	I 8	I 9	I 10	I 11	I 12	I 13	I 14	I 15	I 16	I 17	I 18	I 19	I 20	I 21	I 22	I 23	I 24
ALCESTE																								
PHILINTE																								
CRONTE																								
CÉLIMÈNE																								
BASQUE																								
ÉLIANTE																								
ACASTE																								
CLITANDE																								
OFFICER																								
ARSINDE																								
DUBOIS																								

THE TEAM

Crew

Director: David W. Hoover

Stage Manager: Joni Bankston

Set Design: Mackenzie Franco and Matthew Eberts

Lighting Design: Diane Baas

Head Carpenter: Kevin Griffith

Costume Design: Tony French

Property Design: Ashton Akridge

Sound Design: David W. Hoover

Cast

Alceste: David Brown

Philinte: John Charles II

Oronte: Eduardo Sanchez

Célimène: Sarah Beth James

Basque: Gerardo Hidalgo

Éliante: Ashton Akridge

Clitandre: Khali Freeman

Acaste: Mitchel Courville

Arsinoé: Meghan Shea

Du Bois: Evan Eyer

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, Arsinoé, 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 Célimène, Act III, scene ii

8:00 – Add Basque, Act III, scene iii

8:30 – Add Arsinoé, 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 Célimène, 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 Célimène, Act V, scene ii

8:00 – Add Éliante, Act V, scene iii

8:30 – Add Arsinoé, 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: 5:30 – Opening Night

September 18: 7:30 – Performance

September 19: 7:30 – Performance

September 24: 7:30 – Performance

September 25: 9:30 – Student Matinee

7:30 – Performance

September 26: 7:30 – Performance

September 27: 2:00 – Sunday Matinee

5:00 – Strike

BLOCKING

Blocking Key

C: Célimène

A: Alceste

B: Basque

E: Éliante

P: Philinte

CL: Clitandre

AC: Acaste

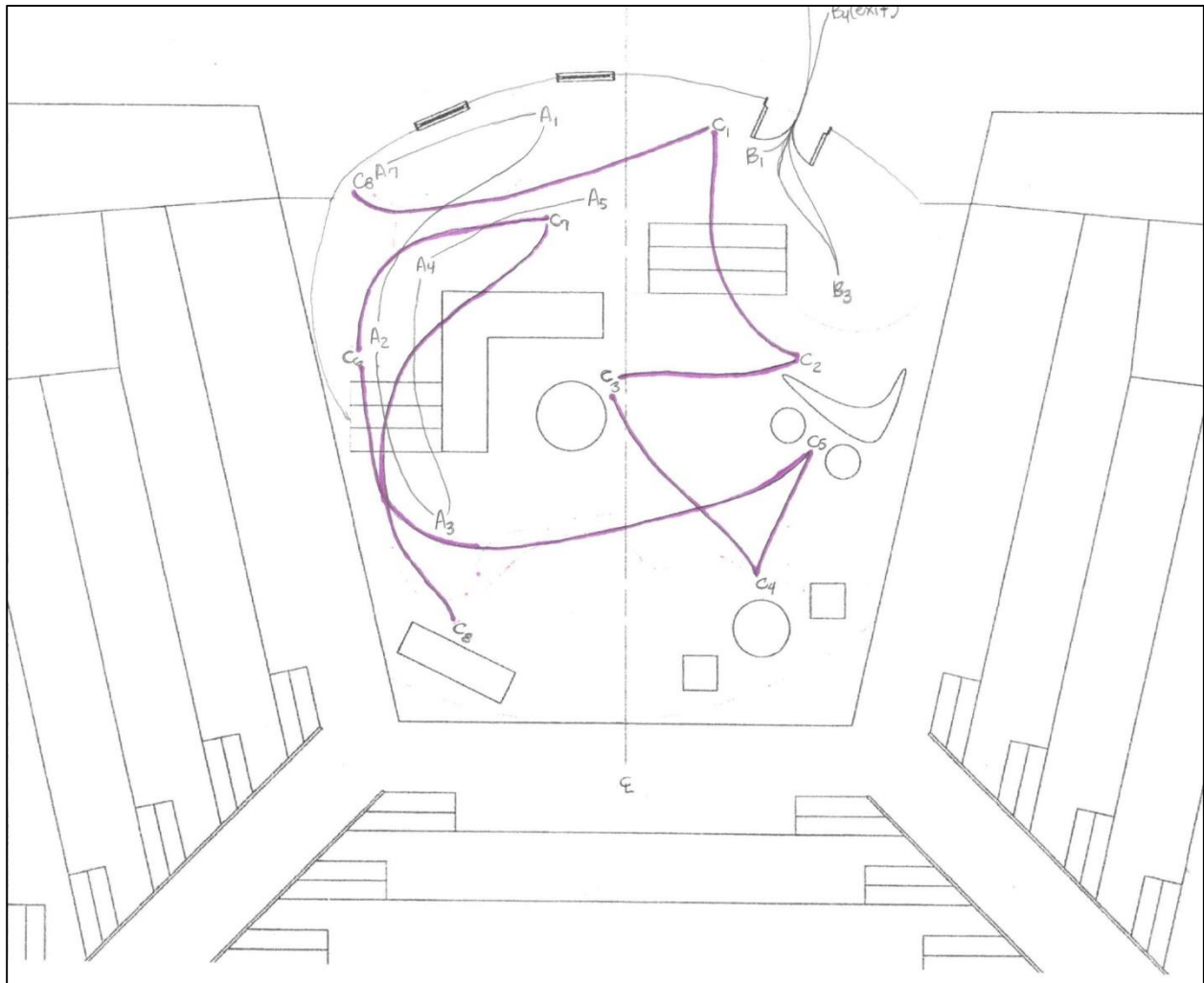
O: Officer

AR: Arsinoé

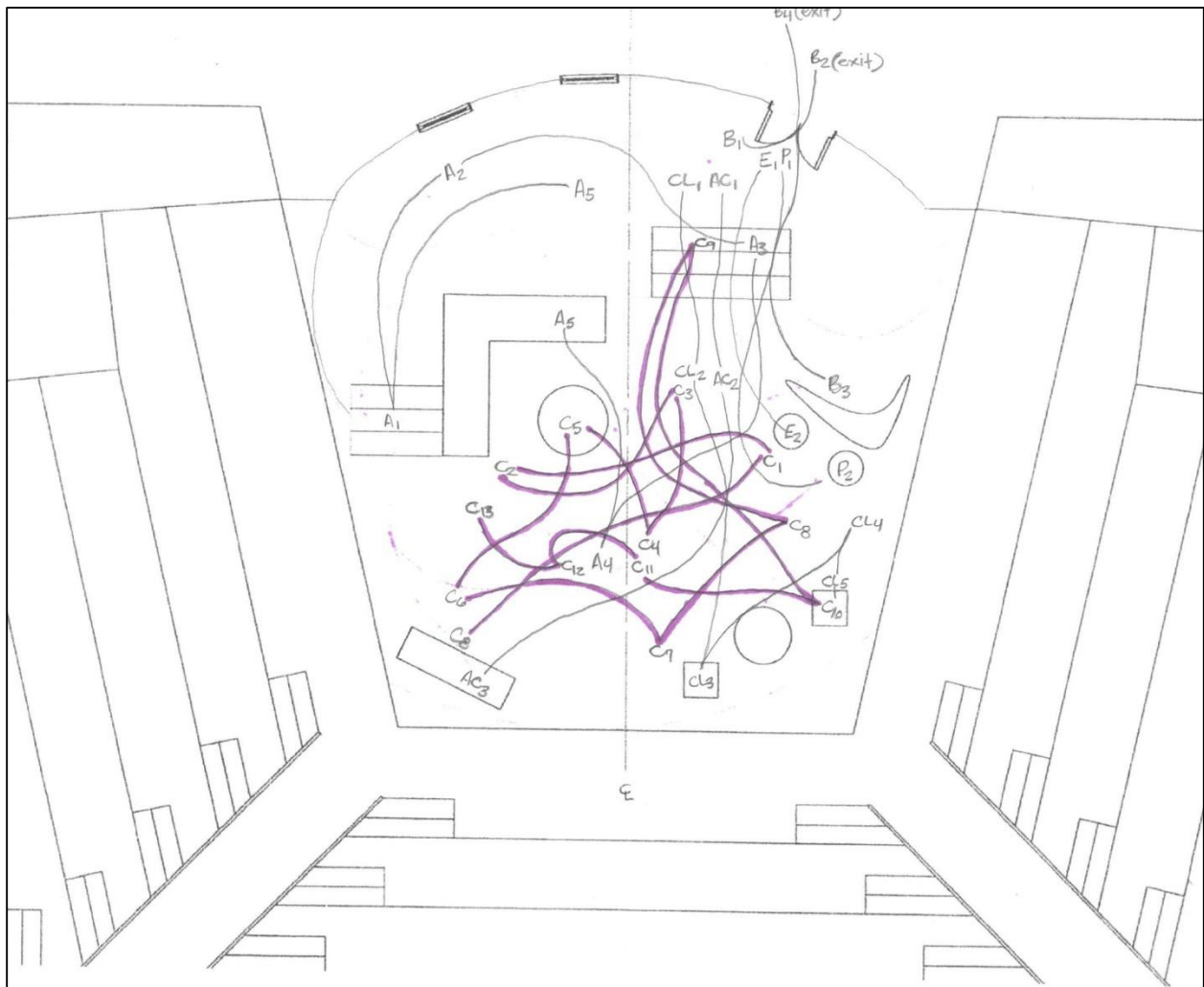
DB: Du Bois

OR: Oronte

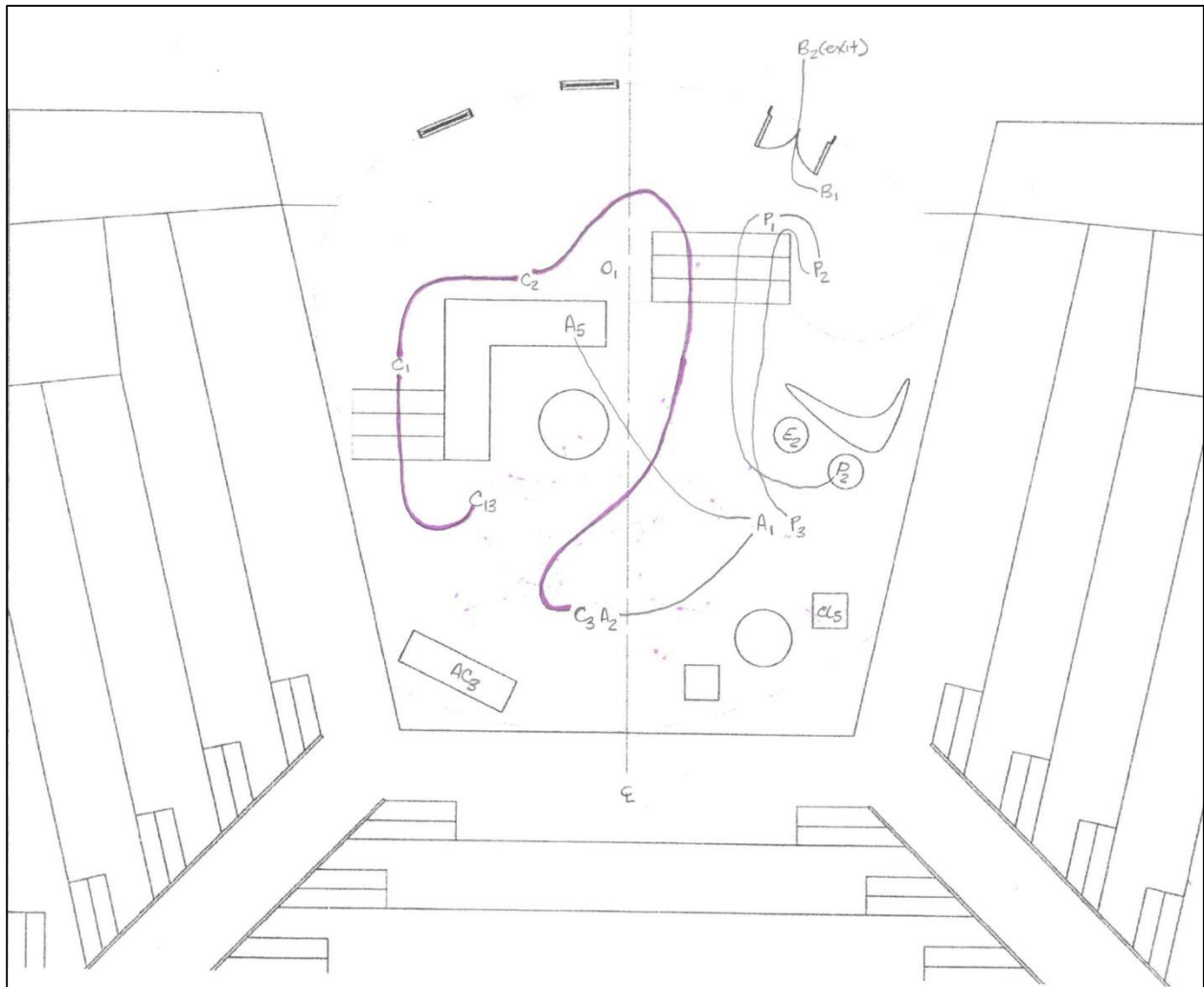
Act II scenes ii, iii



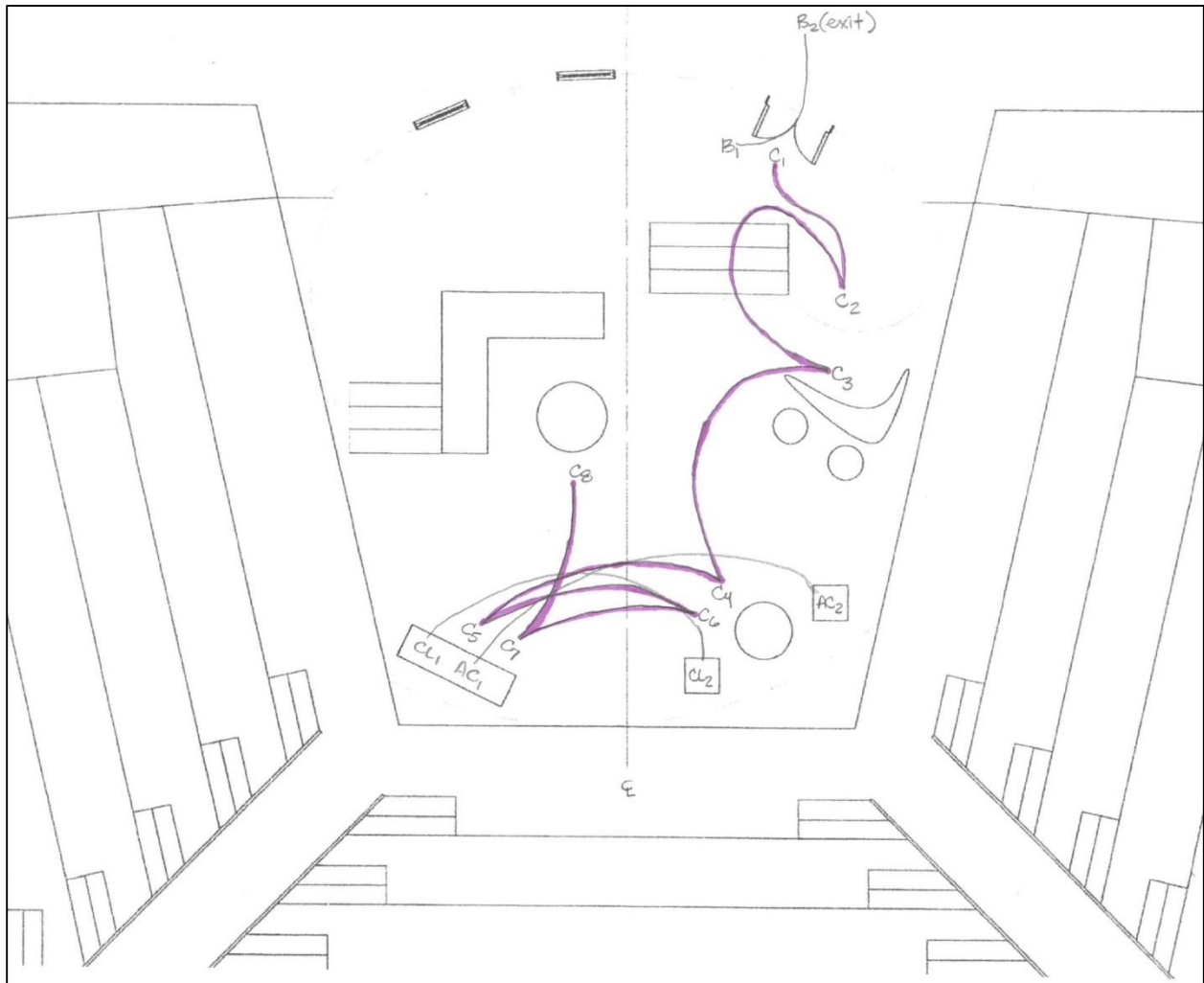
Act II scene iv



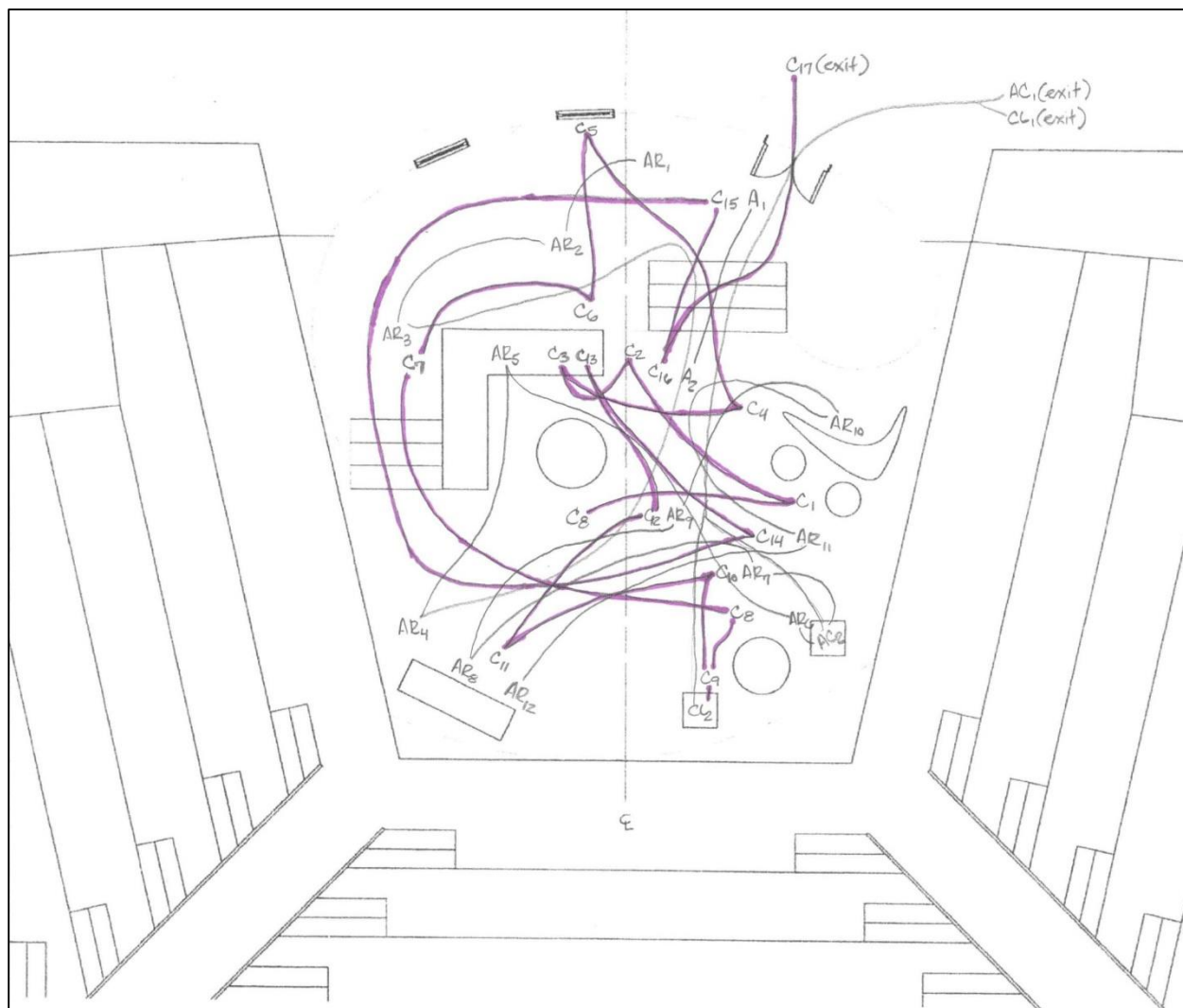
Act II scenes v, vi



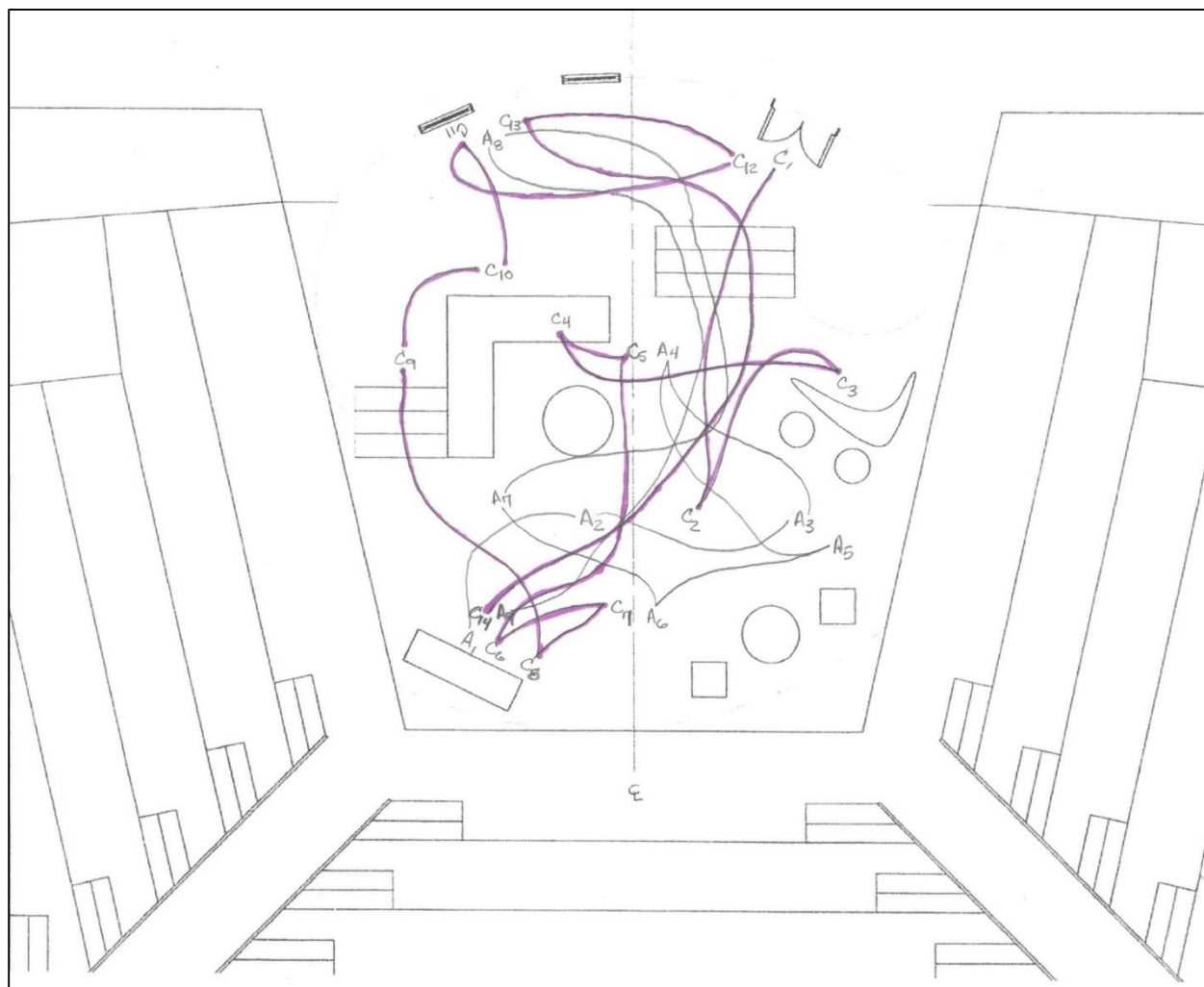
Act III scenes ii, iii



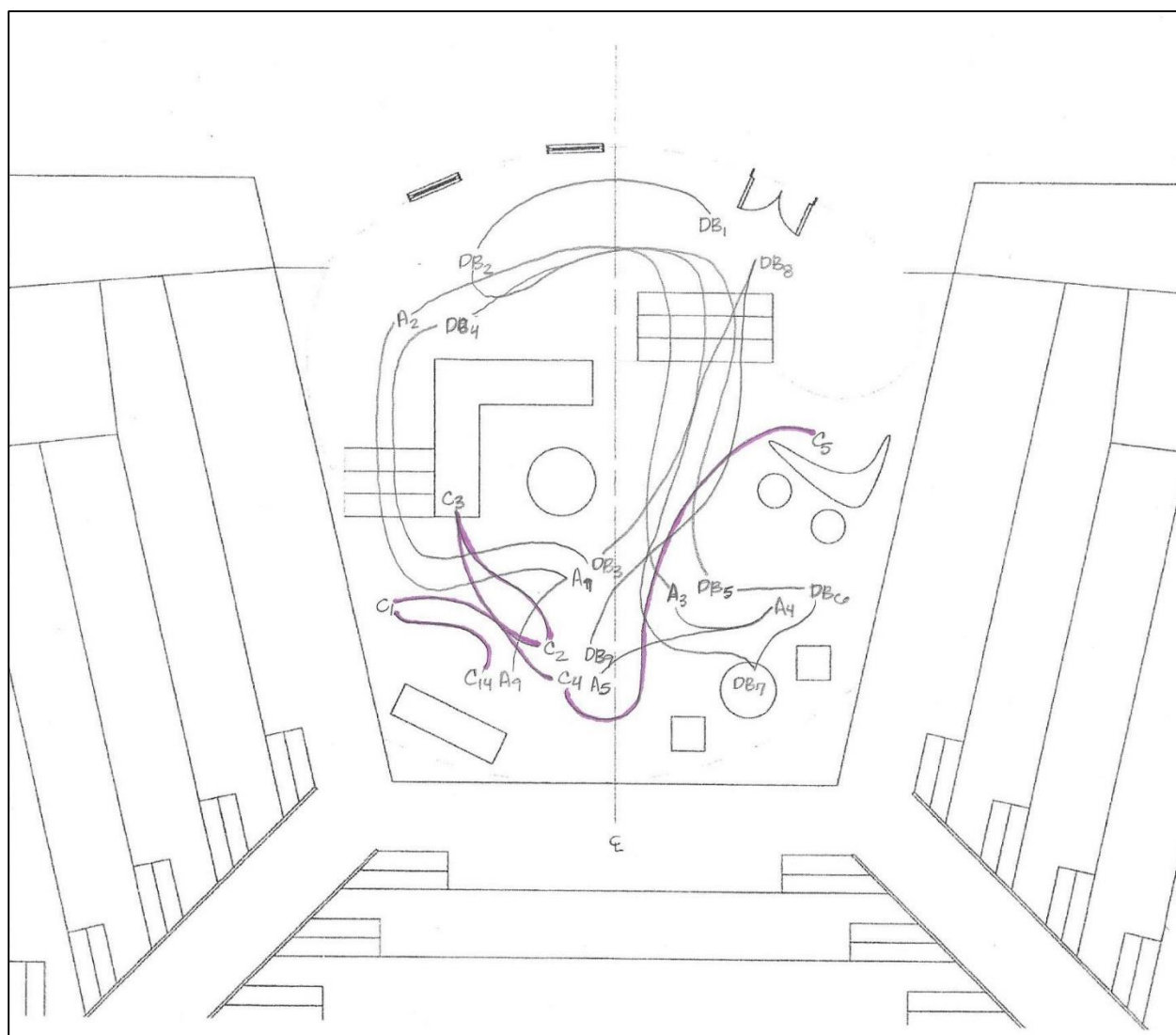
Act III scene iv



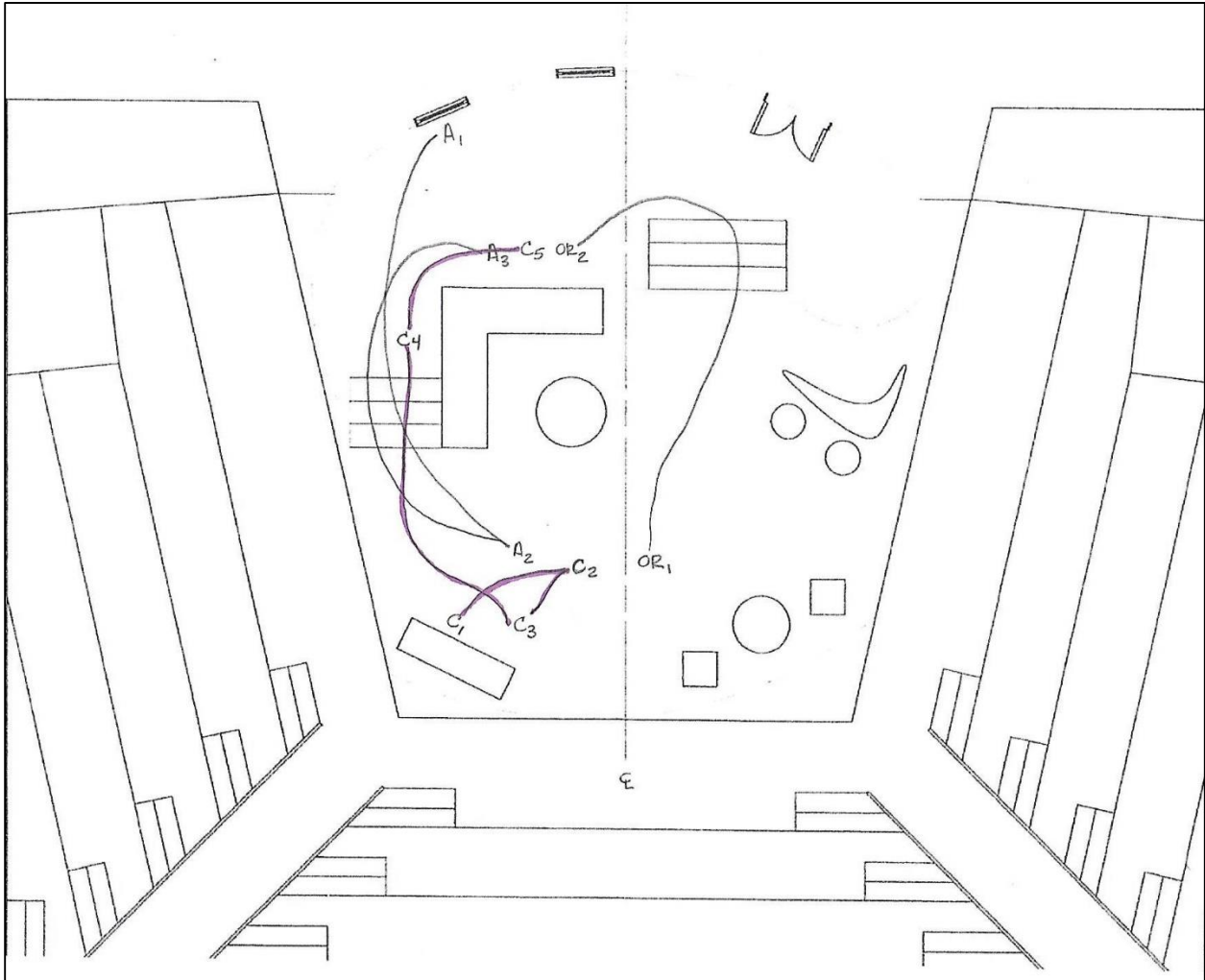
Act IV scene iii



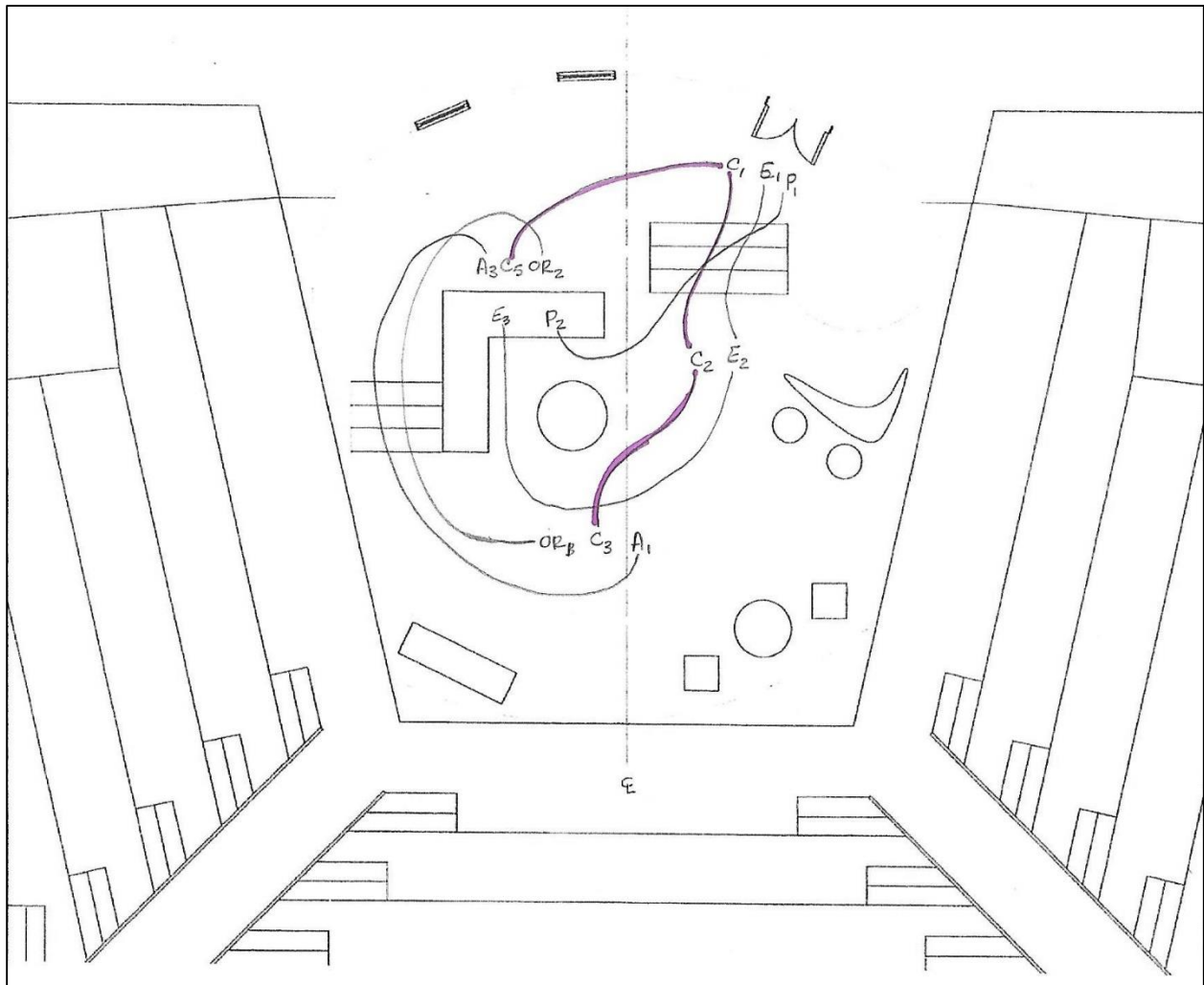
Act IV scene iv



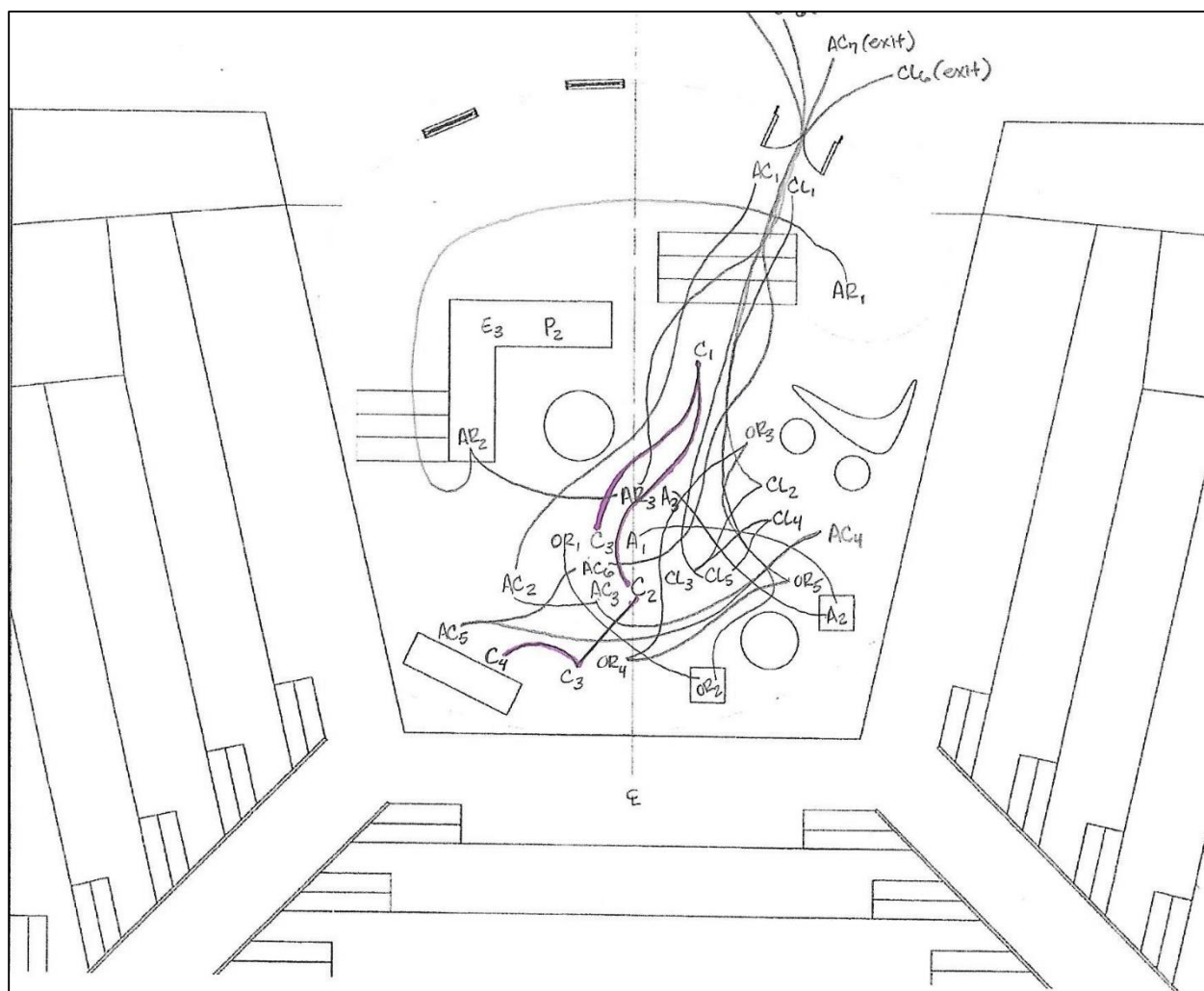
Act V scene ii



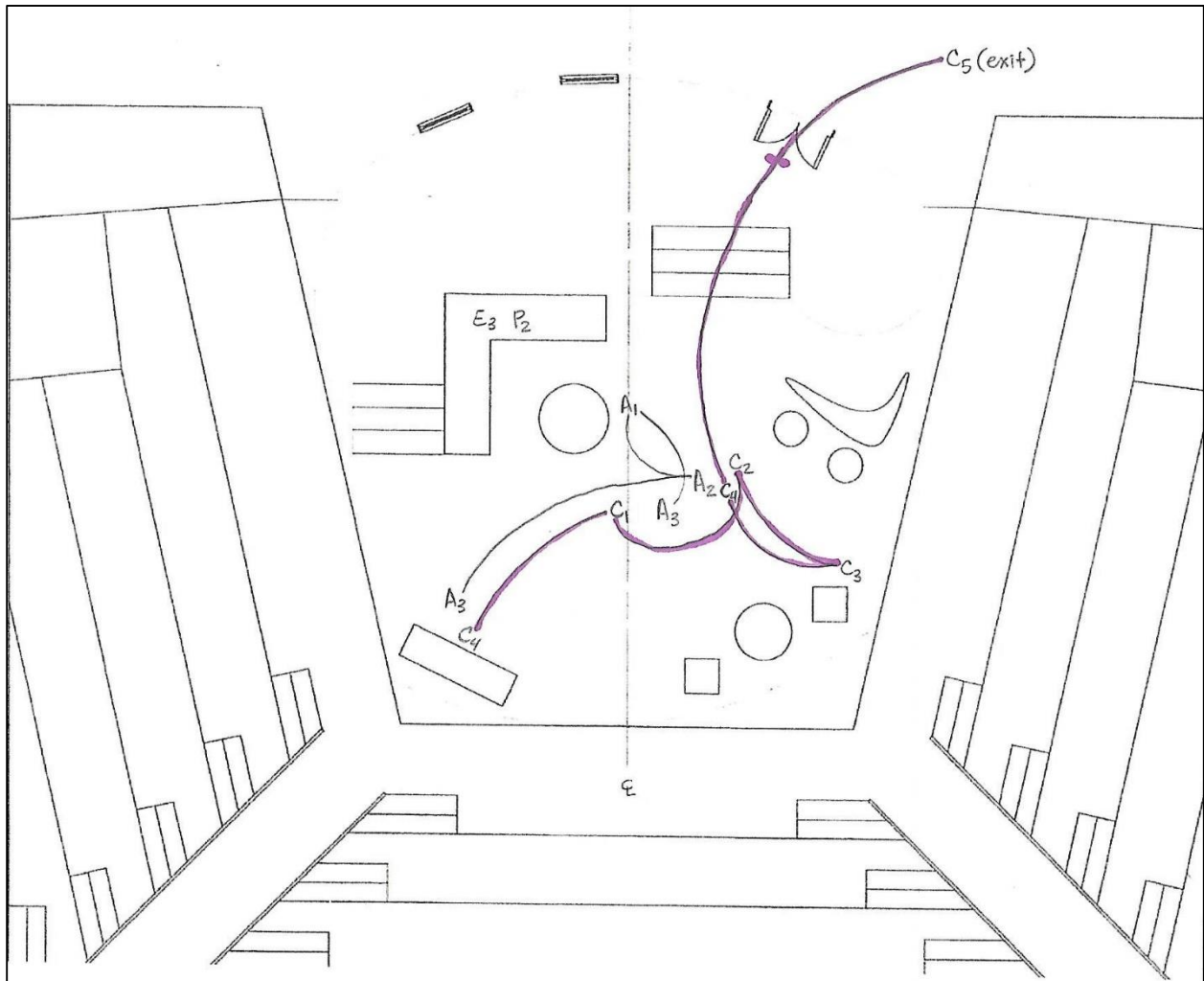
Act V scene iii



Act V scene iv



Act V scene iv (continued)



APPENDIX II

Production Documents

There are times when the urge suddenly takes me to find some
solitary place and avoid all contact with humankind.

The Misanthrope, Act I scene i

PLAYBILL



THE UNIVERSITY *of*
NEW ORLEANS

DEPARTMENT OF
FILM AND THEATRE



DEPARTMENT OF
Film & Theatre
THE UNIVERSITY of NEW ORLEANS

Theatre UNO 2015-2016

The Misanthrope by Molière Directed by David W. Hoover	Sept. 17-19, 24-27 <i>Robert E. Nims Theatre</i>
Agnes of God by John Pielmeier Directed by Beau Bratcher	Nov. 5, 6, 14, 15, 19, 20 <i>Lab Theatre</i>
Two Rooms by Lee Blessing Directed by Erick Wolfe	Nov. 7, 8, 12, 13, 21, 22 <i>Lab Theatre</i>
894 <i>World Premiere</i> by Kate Bailey	April 21-23, April 28-May 1 <i>Robert E. Nims Theatre</i>

BOX OFFICE: 280-SHOW (7469)

Theatre UNO
proudly presents

The Misanthrope

By Molière

Directed by David W. Hoover

September 17-27, 2015

Scenic Design
MacKenzie Franco
Matthew Eberts

Lighting Design
Diane Baas

Costume Design
Tony French

Sound Design
David W. Hoover

Properties Design
Ashton Akridge

Thank you for Coming & Enjoy the Show!!

The Misanthrope

Cast

Alceste.....	David Brown*
Philinte	John Charles II
Oronte	Eduardo Losan
Celimene.....	Sarah Beth James*
Eliante	Ashton Akridge
Arsinoe	Meghan Shea
Acaste.....	Mitchell Courville
Clitandre	Khali Freeman
Basque	Gerardo Hidalgo
DuBois/Officer	Evan Eyer

*In partial fulfillment of the Master of Fine Arts degree

Robert E. Nims Theatre
UNO Performing Arts Center

CAST

David Brown (Alceste) David is in his final year as an acting graduate student, *The Misanthrope* is his thesis performance. He received his undergraduate degree in Korean. After spending several years working in the corporate world he decided to return to school and pursue his passion for acting. He has performed as an improviser across the country with such troupes as *Comedy Sportz* and *Funny Bones*, for the past 9 years. David loves acting for film as well.

John Charles II (Philinte) John is happy to be back for a second year on Theatre UNO's stage. He is also glad to have had the pleasure of working with this talented ensemble. John would like to thank his mom and dad, Nichole and John Charles Sr. for all their love and support. He also wants to thank friends, family members, and everyone else for coming out!

Eduardo Losan (Oronte) Eduardo was born and raised in Guatemala. After graduating High School in 2011, Eduardo was granted a scholarship at The University of New Orleans where he currently pursues a dual degree in Film & Theatre and Business Administration. Losan has been a part of several student films and recently starred as the lead role for the short film *Classic Restoration*, an adaptation of the Bible's passage about the Prodigal Son. In the Fall of 2015 Eduardo will conclude his dual degree and will continue to pursue an acting career in New Orleans.

Sarah Beth James (Celimene) Sarah Beth James is thrilled to be in her third year as a graduate student at the University of New Orleans pursuing an MFA in Performance. She has thoroughly enjoyed working on previous Theatre UNO productions including *Parsifal Worthy*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *Hamlet*. She is grateful to the cast, crew, and director of *The Misanthrope* for another enlightening experience. She would also like to thank each of you for supporting the performing arts.

Ashton Akridge (Eliante) Ashton Akridge is a senior at the University of New Orleans, where she will be graduating this fall with a BA in Film and Theatre. Most recently she has been seen in *Blackbird* by David Harrower at the Old Marquer Theatre. She sends lots of love and thanks to everyone involved with *The Misanthrope*. It has been a joyous process!

CAST

Meghan Shea (Arsinoe) Meghan Shea is thrilled to be a part of *The Misanthrope*. She is a third year graduate student working on her MFA in performance at the University of New Orleans. Meghan is a performer, director, and teacher. Some favorite projects include *Songs for a New World*, *Ragtime*, *Father*, *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*, and *Hamlet*. Meghan would like to thank everyone in this production for their dedication, talent, and quickness to laughter.

Mitchell Courville (Acaste) Mitchell is currently a senior at UNO, graduating this fall with a BA in Film and Theatre Arts. He was most recently seen as Bernstein in Delgado Community Theatre's production of *Dogfight*. Other credits include *Forever Plaid* (Sparky), *Suburbia* (Pony), and roles in *Gypsy*, *Reefer Madness*, and *Lysistrata*. He would like to thank his family for being supportive as always, and the cast and crew of *The Misanthrope* for such a positive experience!

Khalil Freeman (Clitandre) Since his freshman year of high school, Khalil has been apart of The Talented Theater Program. He has also attended NOCCA, New Orleans Center for Creative Arts, as a drama student for his last year of high school. Now he is an undergrad at UNO studying Film and Theatre. He is excited to be back on the stage and is very thankful to be a part of this talented ensemble.

Gerardo Hidalgo (Basque) Gerardo is a senior double major in Mathematics and Civil Engineering. "I'm looking forward to graduation this semester. Enjoy the show!"

Evan Eyer (Officer/Dubois) Evan Eyer is a Senior at UNO looking forward to completing his degree in Film and Theatre. He has recently been seen on Theatre UNO's stage as Laertes in *Hamlet* and is happy to return. He thanks you for

The Misanthrope

Time: 1965 | Place: Paris, France

There will be one 15 minute intermission

WARNING:

This show uses cigarettes which have NO tobacco content. Their use is limited.

Production Team

Director David W. Hoover
Stage Manager Joni Bankston
Technical Director Diane Baas
Scenic Design MacKenzie Franco
Matthew Eberts
Costume Design Tony French
Lighting Design Diane Baas
Sound Design David W. Hoover
Properties Design Ashton Akridge
Running Crew Errine Lester,
Sidhant Mahat
Box Office Erick Wolfe
Poster Design Michael Harkins
Set Construction Nathan Anderson,
Andrew Vaught, Sarah Beth James,
MacKenzie Franco, Matthew Eberts,
FTA 1800 and FTA 3800

Special Thanks

The company of *The Misanthrope* would like to thank several people who make this production possible.

Scott Hutcheson, Sonny Borey, Emery Whalen
Joey, Richard Mayer, Old Marquer Theatre

PRODUCTION TEAM

David W. Hoover (Director) David is the chair of the Department of Film and Theatre at the University of New Orleans. For the Tennessee William's Literary Festival he has directed Alec Baldwin, Elizabeth Ashley, John Goodman, Stephanie Zimbalist, Eli Wallach, and Anne Jackson. In New Orleans his acting/directing work has been seen at Le Petit Theatre du Vieux Carre, Tulane Summer Shakespeare Festival, Le Chat Noir, Southern Rep, Rivertown Theater's for the Performing Arts, and Tulane Summer Lyric. He has worked at several other prestigious theatres that include The Guthrie, the Dallas Theatre Center, American Southwest Theatre Company, Shakespeare Festival of Dallas, and The Lyceum. David is the recipient of the Big Easy, Marquee, Ambie, and Storer Boone Awards. For UNO he has directed over 30 plays including several award winners. His recent production of *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo* was recognized nationally by the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival for Outstanding Contemporary Play and Outstanding Direction. It also garnered the 2015 Big Easy award for Outstanding University Production. Internationally he has been an adjudicator in London, lectured at the Universite de Sorbonne in Paris and has taught extensively in Italy and Mexico. David received an Artist Fellowship award from the Louisiana Division of the Arts and is the recipient of UNO's coveted Career Achievement Award for Excellence in Research presented by the Alumni Association.

Joni Bankston (Stage Manager) Joni Bankston is a Junior Film and Theatre major at the University of New Orleans. This is her first Theatre UNO production as a stage manager. Her previous works include *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Comedy of Errors*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* all with the Acorn Theatre. She would like to thank the cast and crew for all of their hard work and dedication. She would also like to thank you all for coming! Enjoy the show!

Tony French (Costume Designer) Tony French is the New Orleans Theatre Association Endowed Professor and costume designer at the University of New Orleans. He has designed numerous productions at UNO, including many original plays. He has worked with Southern Rep, The Shakespeare Festival at Tulane, Actor's Theatre of Louisville, The Old Globe Theatre, and The Cincinnati Playhouse.

Diane Baas (Lighting Design) Diane K Baas is an Assistant Professor of Lighting Design in the department of Film and Theatre at the University of New Orleans, where she is also the Technical Director. She works as a freelance lighting designer, locally and nationally. She holds a BFA in Lighting and Scenic Design, a BA in Art History and Painting, both from Tulane University in New Orleans, and an MFA in Lighting Design from the School of Drama at the University of Washington in Seattle.

MacKenzie Franco (Scene Design) MacKenzie is thrilled to venture into the world of scenic design and live theatre. Enjoy the show!

Matthew Eberts (Scene Design) Matthew would like to thank everyone involved with *The Misanthrope* but especially Kevin Griffith and Diane Baas.

NAST

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS OF THEATRE

The University of New Orleans Department of Film & Theatre is proud to be an accredited member of the National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST).

NAST, founded in 1965, is an organization of higher education institutions (colleges, universities and conservatories). There are approximately 150 accredited institutional members. It establishes national standards for undergraduate and graduate degrees nationally.

UNO was first accredited by NAST in 2000. We continue to be the only NAST accredited program in the New Orleans metropolitan area.

The Kennedy Center

THE JOHNY F. KENNEDY CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

The Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival™ 48, part of the Rubenstein Arts Access Program, is generously funded by David and Alice Rubenstein.

Additional support is provided by The Honorable Stuart Bernstein and Wilma E. Bernstein; the Blanche and Irving Laurie Foundation; the Dr. Gerald and Paula McNichols Foundation; The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust; Hilton Worldwide; and Beatrice and Anthony Wellers and the Anthony Foundation.

Education and related artistic programs are made possible through the generosity of the National Committee for the Performing Arts, and the President's Advisory Committee on the Arts.

This production is entered in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF). The aims of this national theater education program are to identify and promote quality in college-level theater production. To this end, each production entered is eligible for a response by a regional KCACTF representative, and selected students and faculty are invited to participate in KCACTF programs involving scholarships, internships, grants and awards for actors, directors, dramaturgs, playwrights, designers, stage managers and critics at both the regional and national levels.

Productions entered on the Participating level are eligible for invitation to the KCACTF regional festival and may also be considered for national awards recognizing outstanding achievement in production, design, direction and performance.

Last year more than 1,300 productions were entered in the KCACTF involving more than 200,000 students nationwide. By entering this production, our theater department is sharing in the KCACTF goals to recognize, reward, and celebrate the exemplary work produced in college and university theaters across the nation.

UNO Administration

President..... Dr. Peter J. Fos
Provost Dr. John W. Nicklow
Dean, College of Liberal Arts Dr. Kevin Graves

DEPARTMENT OF FILM & THEATRE

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ASSOCIATE CHAIR

Debra Daniel

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Anthony French
Laszlo Fulop

Kevin Graves
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Kevin Griffith
Erik Hansen

Laura Medina
J. Hampton Overton
Danny Retz

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Aaron Rushin

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Madison Beaudot
Alaina Boyett
Margaret Broach

David Brown
Mary McDade Casteel
Christian Chesnut
Barry Cunningham
Rashada Fortier
Sarah Beth James

Joshua Pereira
Meghan Shea
Andrew Vaught
Kathleen Vieira
Erick Wolfe

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Co-Secretary Even Eyer
Co-Secretary Meghan Shea
Historian Sarah Beth James

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"PURE, DAZZLING, THEATRICAL ENTERTAINMENT IN KENNER"
-The Times Picayune

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 <p>HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS WITHOUT REALLY TRYING THE MUSICAL COMEDY May 6-22, 2016</p>	 <p>THE WIZARD OF OZ July 14-24, 2016</p>

PRODUCTION PHOTOS

Photos by Diane Baas











PRESS RELEASE



THE UNIVERSITY of
NEW ORLEANS

DEPARTMENT OF FILM AND THEATRE

September 2015

Contact: Erik Wolfe, Box Office

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

504-280-SHOW (7469)

THE MISANTHROPE

by Molière

Directed by David W. Hoover

September 17 - 27, 2015

Robert E. Nims Theatre, UNO Performing Arts Center

Theatre UNO is proud to present *The Misanthrope* by Molière, a satire of polite society in which power plays and cruel gossip are the background for unrequited love and passionate seductions. Alceste, a man of strong convictions, fiercely rejects the artifice of 17th century French courtly society, isolating himself from this world he views as wholly superficial. **Theatre UNO** will explore this theme while transporting the play to the Paris of 1965. Suddenly, Alceste finds himself falling desperately in love with coy and flirtatious Célimène, despite loathing her behavior and reprimanding her constantly. Will Alceste stick with his integrity and exile himself forever from this shallow society or will he abandon it all for the resolute Célimène who represents all he so adamantly criticizes?

Performances will take place in the Robert E. Nims Theatre in the UNO Performing Arts Center, and will run Thursday, Friday, and Saturday September 17th through September 26th at 7:30 p.m., with a Sunday matinee, September 27th, at 2:30 p.m.

The Misanthrope is directed by David W. Hoover and features David Brown as Alceste and Sarah Beth James as Célimène. Other cast members include: John Charles II, Eduardo Sanchez, Ashton Akridge, Meghan Shea, Mitchel Courville, Khali Freeman, Gerardo Hidalgo, and Evan Eyer. This production also showcases the work of Matthew Eberts (Set Design), Mackenzie Franco (Set Design), Diane Baas (Lighting Design), Anthony French (Costume Design), Ashton Akridge (Props) and Joni Bankston (Stage Manager).


Tickets

General Admission \$12 / Students/Faculty/Seniors \$8

Online at www.brownpapertickets.com

Box office: 280-SHOW (7469) or theatre.uno.edu

PRODUCTION POSTER

 THE UNIVERSITY of
NEW ORLEANS
Department of Film & Theatre

The Misanthrope
by Molière

Directed by David W. Hoover
"Love's not ruled by reason"

Sept. 17-19, 24-26 at 7:30pm
Sept. 27 at 2:30pm

ROBERT E. NIMS THEATRE, PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
BOX OFFICE 504.280.SHOW (7469)

IN THE NEWS

Theatre UNO Presents Molière's *The Misanthrope*

UNO News – September 8, 2015



Theatre UNO's *The Misanthrope* features the battle of the sexes, starring Célimène (Sarah Beth James) and Alceste (David Brown).

Join Us!

Performances will take place in the Robert E. Nims Theatre in the UNO Performing Arts Center, and will open on Thursday, Sept. 17. The closing performance will be on Sunday, Sept. 27.

Tickets

Purchase online at www.brownpapertickets.com or at the Box Office: 280-SHOW (7469).

Performances of Molière's classic satire, *The Misanthrope*, will take place in the Robert E. Nims Theatre at the UNO Performing Arts Center beginning Thursday, Sept. 17 and running through Sunday, Sept. 27. Thursday through Saturday, performances begin at 7:30 p.m., and Sunday's matinee performance begins at 2:30 p.m. *The Misanthrope* is directed by David W. Hoover and features David Brown as Alceste and Sarah Beth James as Célimène.

Theatre UNO's latest offering is Molière's satire of polite society in which power plays and cruel gossip are the background for unrequited love and passionate seductions. Alceste, a man of

strong convictions, fiercely rejects the artifice of 17th Century French courtly society, isolating himself from this world he views as wholly superficial. The players will explore this theme while transporting the play to the Paris of 1965. Suddenly, Alceste finds himself falling desperately in love with coy and flirtatious Célimène, despite loathing her behavior and reprimanding her constantly. Audiences will be delighted along the journey as they see whether Alceste will stick with his integrity and exile himself forever from a shallow society or whether he will abandon it all for the resolute Célimène, who represents all he so adamantly criticizes.

Other cast members include: John Charles II, Eduardo Sanchez, Ashton Akridge, Meghan Shea, Mitchel Courville, Khali Freeman, Gerardo Hidalgo, and Evan Eyer. This production also showcases the work of Matthew Eberts (Set Design), Mackenzie Franco (Set Design), Diane Baas (Lighting Design), Anthony French (Costume Design), Ashton Akridge (Property Design) and Joni Bankston (Stage Manager).

The award-winning UNO Department of Film and Theatre is a proud member of National Association of Schools of Theatre (NAST), founded in 1965 to establish national standards for undergraduate and graduate programs in Theatre and Film, and boasts the only NAST-accredited program in the New Orleans metropolitan area.

Theatre UNO is a regular winner at the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival, an elite year-long competition of university productions from all over the nation, and the university's theater department has produced the highest number of graduates nominated for the city's esteemed Big Easy Entertainment Awards.

The Misanthrope (finally) comes to UNO

By Andrew LaBorde – September 2, 2015

This September will see the opening of *The Misanthrope*, a Theatre Department production that was originally set to premiere last spring, but ended up having to be postponed.

David Hoover, the Film and Theatre Department Chair, said the postponement was due to a budget freeze last spring, leaving the set and costumes unfinished.

Joni Bankston, stage manager for the upcoming production, said the postponement period was “strange” for everybody working on the show. The budget freeze forced the cast and crew to stop rehearsals in the spring, but after the summer break Bankston is encouraged.

“A couple of days before the semester started, we had our read-through again and it definitely had new life and people bringing new ideas. If anything, the postponement aided us in a way,” said Bankston.

On the postponement experience as a whole, Bankston called it “chaotic,” but said everybody involved never lost confidence in moving the production forward. Bankston credits her team with working tirelessly trying to finish the set, which she says looks great.

Despite losing actors to graduation, Bankston said she is thrilled with the way the new actors have stepped in and joined the team.

“Just from me sitting there and writing down all my notes and listening to them, it’s been crazy funny,” said Bankston.

The Misanthrope is a 17th century comedy written by Molière, a famous French playwright. Bankston notes a primary theme of hypocrisy in the play, saying a lot of the themes in the play still remain true in today’s society. The timeless themes open the play up to different interpretations.

While the original play is set during the time period that Molière wrote it, UNO’s adaptation has it set in 1965.

The play centers around Alceste, the titular misanthrope. “He is very straightforward, speaks his mind and has a very negative outlook on humanity as a whole,” Bankston said when characterizing Alceste.

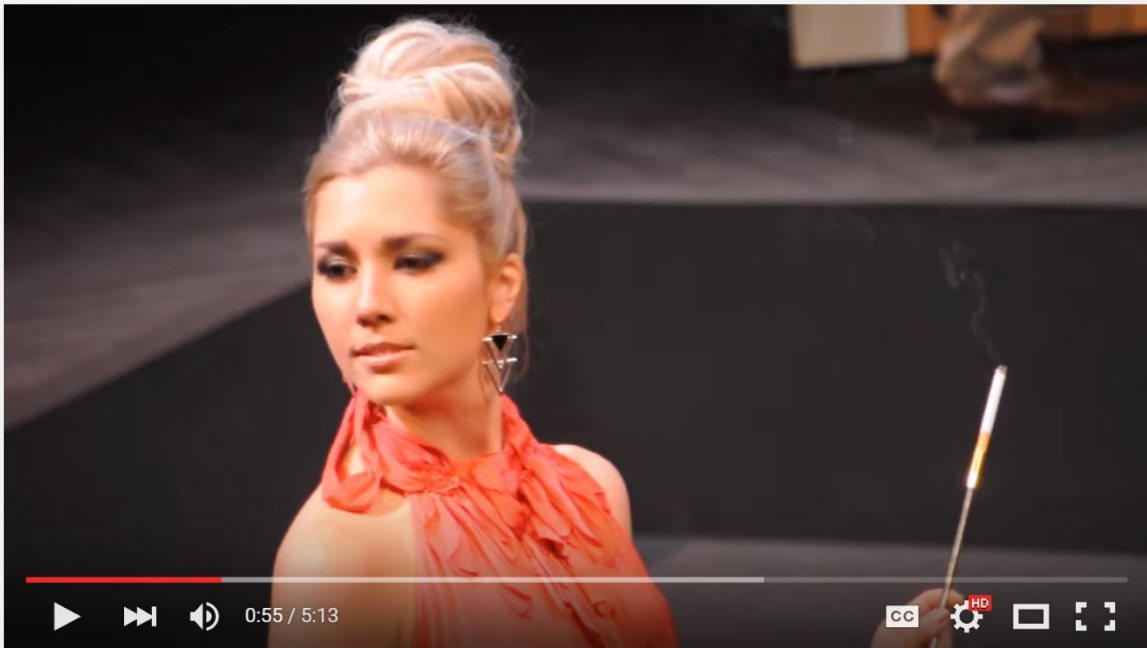
Célimène, a love interest of Alceste, is a young widow who has a lot of suitors vying for her attention. However, Alceste wants Célimène for himself. All the while, he battles various lawsuits, claiming justice is on his side.

The Misanthrope is set to open in the Performing Arts Center on Sept. 17, with performances on the 18, 19, 24-26 and Sunday Sept. 27. *Two Rooms* and *Agnes of God* are among the other productions lined up for the season for the Film and Theatre Department.

PROMOTIONAL VIDEO

Link to Promotional Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLJ22lZeH6Q>



The Misanthrope at UNO

APPENDIX III

Scored Script: Color Coded

He'd think he was cutting a very ordinary figure if he found
himself agreeing with anyone else.

The Misanthrope, Act II scene iv

COLOR CODED SCRIPT

Color Coded Script Key



Hints to the Character: Célimène



Unanswered Questions



Operative Words



Trouble Words



Beats, Beat Changes and Stimuli



Célimène

Characters

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
 Marshals of France

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

Act I

Scene i:

PHILINTE, ALCESTE

PHILINTE: What is it? What's the matter?
 ALCESTE: Oh, leave me alone, please.
 PHILINTE: But I ask you once again what bizarre idea –
 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 –
 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 mortally 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. God! 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.

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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?
 ALCESTE: No! I can't bear these despicable mannerisms that so many of your men of fashion affect. There's nothing I hate more than the contortions of your protestation-mongers, the affable exchangers of fatuous greetings, polite 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!
 PHILINTE: So you would tell old Émilie how badly it suits her to pass

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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!
 PHILINTE: And Dorilas, 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!
 PHILINTE: You're not serious?
 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 fling 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!
 PHILINTE: No, seriously, give up these violent outbursts. 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 I'm at law with! The rogue is

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 men 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 never a . . . God! That argument is so full of impertinent nonsense that I'll say no more.

PHILINTE: Indeed, it would be best if you did keep quiet. Rail less against your adversary and give some thought to your lawsuit.

ALCESTE: I'll do no such thing. On that my mind's made up.

PHILINTE: Then who do you think will use their influence in the right 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?

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.

PHILINTE: I wouldn't count on it.

ALCESTE: I won't lift a finger.

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

ALCESTE: No matter.

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

ALCESTE: So be it. I'll await the outcome.

PHILINTE: But . . .

ALCESTE: I shall have the pleasure of losing my case.

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.

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.

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

ALCESTE: So much the worse for them.

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 Arsinoé 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 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.

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?

ORONTE: To you sir. Have you any objection?

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

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

ALCESTE: Sir –

ORONTE: You enjoy an immense reputation without parallel in this country.

ALCESTE: Sir –

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

ALCESTE: Sir –

ORONTE: 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 –

ORONTE: What! You decline?

ALCESTE: 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'm quite the wrong person to pronounce on such matters. Pray be good enough to excuse me.

ORONTE: But why?

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

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.

ORONTE (reading): 'Sonnet' ... it's a sonnet. 'Hope' ... the lady in question has deigned 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.

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.

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.

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?

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!

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

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!

PHILINTE: I never heard lines more gracefully phrased.

ALCESTE (aside): Good God!

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.

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 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. 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.

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 so – 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 Philinte:) Yes sir, you may laugh, but whatever your wits and your 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 most obedient.

Scene iii:

PHILINTE, ALCESTE

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!

PHILINTE: But –

ALCESTE: Leave me alone!

PHILINTE: It's too –

ALCESTE: Go away!

PHILINTE: If I –

ALCESTE: Not another word!

PHILINTE: But what –

ALCESTE: I won't listen.

PHILINTE: But –

ALCESTE: Still there?

PHILINTE: You insult –

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

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

Act II

Scene i:

ALCESTE, CÉLIMÈNE

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 tell 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.

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.

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 periwig? 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: Resign yourself to losing your case, Madame, with a firm 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.

CÉLIMÈNE: But shouldn't the very fact that I distribute my favour so widely afford some reassurance to your inquiet 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 reproach for being so jealous – have over any of them?

CÉLIMÈNE: The satisfaction of knowing that you are loved.

ALCESTE: And what reason have I to cherish any such belief?

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?

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 no one can deceive you but yourself. Perhaps you're happy 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...

Scene ii:

CÉLIMÈNE, ALCESTE, BASQUE

CÉLIMÈNE: What is it?

BASQUE: Alceste is downstairs.

CÉLIMÈNE: Very well. Show him up. (*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?

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...

Scene iii:

BASQUE, ALCESTE, CÉLIMÈNE

BASQUE: Clitandre is here as well, Madame.

ALCESTE: Oh, of course, he would be! (*Makes as if to leave*.)

CÉLIMÈNE: Where are you running off to?

ALCESTE: I'm going.

CÉLIMÈNE: Stay.

ALCESTE: What for?

CÉLIMÈNE: Do stay.

ALCESTE: I can't.

CÉLIMÈNE: I want you to.

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:) Haven't you gone?

ALCESTE: 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.

CÉLIMÈNE: Have you lost your senses?

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

CÉLIMÈNE: Oh!

ALCESTE: You must take one side or the other.

CÉLIMÈNE: I suppose this is a joke?

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

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.³ 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.

ALCESTE: 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 Philinte): 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.

ALCESTE: 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'.

CLITANDRE: They say he's on very good terms with Béatrice.

CÉLIMÈNE: 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.

ALCESTE: And what do you make of Adraspe?

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?

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 stomaching. To my mind, it completely ruins the dinners he gives.

PHILINTE: His uncle, Damon, 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.

ALCESTE: 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.

Flatterers 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.

ALCESTE: 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.³

ALCESTE: Well for my part I maintain –

CÉLIMÈNE: Suppose we **drop** the subject now and take a turn in the gallery. What? Are you going gentlemen?

CLITANDRE and ACASTE (*together*): By no means, Madam.

ALCESTE (*to Célimène*): You seem very much concerned lest they should go. (*To Clitandre and Acaste*): Leave whenever you please, gentlemen, but I 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**.

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**.

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?

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.

OFFICER: **The Marshals of France, whose warrant I bear**, require you to appear before them, sir, immediately.

ALCESTE: Who? Me sir?

OFFICER: You sir. In person.

ALCESTE: For what purpose?

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.

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**.

PHILINTE: If you would only be a little more –

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

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 dote 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.

ARSINOÉ: One inevitably lays oneself open by offering any word of reproof, 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.

ARSINOÉ: 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.

ARSINOÉ: 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.

ARSINOÉ: 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 subterfuges: 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 Madame! Let's see how you do it. Show us the secret, try to make yourself attractive and –

ARSINOÉ: 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.)

Scene v:

ALCESTE, ARSINOÉ

ARSINOÉ: 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?

ARSINOÉ: 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!

ARSINOÉ: 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!

ARSINOÉ: 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 I have the qualities necessary for success there or to make my fortune 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.

ARSINOÉ: 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.

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

ARSINOÉ: 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.

ARSINOÉ: 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.

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.

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

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.

ARSINOÉ: 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

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 sonnet.' Whereupon to bring the matter to a conclusion they made them shake hands and left it at that.

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 Célime 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.

ÉLIANTE: It just shows that love isn't always a matter of temperamental affinities. All the usual ideas of hidden compatibility are proved quite wrong in this case.

PHILINTE: And do you believe, from what you can see, that she loves him?

ÉLIANTE: It's hard to say. How is one to judge whether she's really in love with him? She's not entirely sure of her feelings herself. Sometimes she's in love without knowing it and at other times she fancies she's in love when she isn't at all.

PHILINTE: I'm afraid our friend will have more trouble with this cousin of yours than he imagines. To be honest, if he felt as I do he'd turn his attentions in quite a different direction. He'd be far better advised, Madame, if he took advantage of the feelings you have for him.

ÉLIANTE: Well, I make no bones about it – I think we should be open and honest in such matters. I don't oppose his love for Célimène; on the contrary I encourage it. If it was up to me, he would marry the lady of his choice with my blessing. But if, as may well happen in this case, his love were to encounter some obstacle and Célimène gives her heart to someone else, I might bring myself to accept his addresses without being offended by the fact someone else had already rejected them.

PHILINTE: And I for my part, Madame, do nothing to oppose his high regard for your beauty. He could tell you himself, were he so minded, what I have gone out of my way to say to him on this matter. If, however, they were indeed to marry and you in consequence were not in a position to receive his addresses, then I should do all I could to win for myself those signal favours you now so generously accord him. I should count myself happy if, he having renounced them, you transferred them to me.

ÉLIANTE: You're joking, Philinte.

PHILINTE: Not at all Madame, I say it in all sincerity. I await the opportunity of offering you my entire devotion. All my hopes are directed towards that happy moment.

Scene ii:

ALCESTE, ÉLIANTE, PHILINTE

ALCESTE: Ah Madame, avenge me! Avenge an injury which is more than my constancy can bear!

ÉLIANTE: What is it? Whatever can have upset you so?

ALCESTE: Something beyond mortal experience! A calamity more overwhelming than anything within the realms of nature! It's all over! ... My love ... I don't know how to say it!

ÉLIANTE: Try to calm down a little.

ALCESTE: Merciful heaven! Why should such graces go with such odious, such criminal baseness?

ÉLIANTE: But what can have –

ALCESTE: It's the end of everything. I'm ... I'm betrayed, and utterly undone! Célimène ... who would have believed such a thing ... Célimène has deceived me! She's faithless after all!

ÉLIANTE: Have you some good reason for believing this?

PHILINTE: Maybe it's some hasty misconception? Your jealous temper sometimes makes you imagine things.

ALCESTE: Confound it! Mind your own business, sir! What more certain 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 Oronte, that's the evidence of my betrayal and her shame. ... Oronte, whose advances I thought she shunned ... of all my rivals the one I feared least!

PHILINTE: A letter may well give the wrong impression. Sometimes it's not as compromising as it seems.

ALCESTE: You again sir! Be so good as to let me alone and just mind 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 now to heal me of this intolerable hurt. Avenge me against this ungrateful and faithless relative of yours who has betrayed my constant love so despicably. Avenge an action which must surely fill you with horror.

ÉLIANTE: I avenge you? How?

ALCESTE: By accepting my love. Take it Madame! Take the heart she has betrayed. That's how I shall be avenged! I shall punish her by

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, no! 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? CÉLIMÈNE: 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 world! 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?

CÉLIMÈNE: 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?

ALCESTE: Can you look upon it and not blush for the wrong it does me? The whole tone of the letter convicts you!

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 –

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 Célime): 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?

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.

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.

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?

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.

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?

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!

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?

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?

Act V

Scene i:

ALCESTE, PHILINTE

ALCESTE: I tell you, my mind's made up.

PHILINTE: But however serious this blow may be, do you really need to . . .

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, a rogue, whose scandalous past is notorious, emerges triumphant! 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 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. 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!

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 iniquity 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.

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.)*

Scene ii:

ORONTE, CÉLIMÈNE, ALCESTE

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 renounce any further claim to her hand.

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

ORONTE: 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.

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.

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...' ¹⁵

(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...' ¹⁶

(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 mad 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 Clitandre 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 reproach me with anything you care to name. I'm in the wrong 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 abject 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 fortune 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 are everything to me, I reject your proposition. This bitter insult releases me from your ignoble fetters for ever. (*Exit Célimène. Alceste turns to Éliante.*) Madame, your beauty is graced by countless virtues. I have never known you to be anything but sincere. I have long 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, 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.*)

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 1686 at the Théâtre du
Palais Royal by the King's Players*

APPENDIX IV

Original Scored Script

Her charm is irresistible and I'm sure my love will rescue her
from the follies of our times.

The Misanthrope, Act I scene i

Characters

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
 Marshals of France

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

Act I

Scene i:

PHILINTE, ALCESTE

PHILINTE: What is it? What's the matter?
 ALCESTE: Oh, leave me alone, please.
 PHILINTE: But I ask you once again what bizarre idea –
 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 –
 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 mortally 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 assur-
 ances, 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. God! 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.

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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?
 ALCESTE: No! I can't bear these despicable mannerisms that so many
 of your men of fashion affect. There's nothing I hate more than the
 contortions of your protestation-mongers, the affable exchangers of
 fatuous greetings, polite 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!
 PHILINTE: So you would tell old Émilie how badly it suits her to pass

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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!
 PHILINTE: And Dorilas, 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!
 PHILINTE: You're not serious?
 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 fling 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!
 PHILINTE: No, seriously, give up these violent outbursts. 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 I'm at law with! The rogue is

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 men 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 never a . . . God! That argument is so full of impertinent nonsense that I'll say no more.

PHILINTE: Indeed, it would be best if you did keep quiet. Rail less against your adversary and give some thought to your lawsuit.

ALCESTE: I'll do no such thing. On that my mind's made up.

PHILINTE: Then who do you think will use their influence in the right 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?

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.

PHILINTE: I wouldn't count on it.

ALCESTE: I won't lift a finger.

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

ALCESTE: No matter.

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

ALCESTE: So be it. I'll await the outcome.

PHILINTE: But . . .

ALCESTE: I shall have the pleasure of losing my case.

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.

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.

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

ALCESTE: So much the worse for them.

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 Arsinoé 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 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.

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?

ORONTE: To you sir. Have you any objection?

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

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

ALCESTE: Sir –

ORONTE: You enjoy an immense reputation without parallel in this country.

ALCESTE: Sir –

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

ALCESTE: Sir –

ORONTE: May I be smuck 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 –

ORONTE: What! You decline?

ALCESTE: 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'm quite the wrong person to pronounce on such matters. Pray be good enough to excuse me.

ORONTE: But why?

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

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.

ORONTE (*reading*): 'Sonnet' . . . it's a sonnet. 'Hope' . . . the lady in question has deigned 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.

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.

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.

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!

PHILINTE: I am quite smitten with this beginning!

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

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!

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

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!

PHILINTE: I never heard lines more gracefully phrased.

ALCESTE (*aside*): Good God!

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.

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 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. 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.

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 so – 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 Philinte*) Yes sir, you may laugh, but whatever your wits and your 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 most obedient.

Scene iii:

PHILINTE, ALCESTE

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!

PHILINTE: But —

ALCESTE: Leave me alone!

PHILINTE: It's too —

ALCESTE: Go away!

PHILINTE: If I —

ALCESTE: Not another word!

PHILINTE: But what —

ALCESTE: I won't listen.

PHILINTE: But —

ALCESTE: Still there?

PHILINTE: You insult —

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

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

Act II

Scene i:

ALCESTE, CÉLIMÈNE

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 tell 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.

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.

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: Resign yourself to losing your case, Madame, with a firm 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.

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 reproach for being so jealous — have over any of them?

CÉLIMÈNE: The satisfaction of knowing that you are loved.

ALCESTE: And what reason have I to cherish any such belief?

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?

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 no one can deceive you but yourself. Perhaps you're happy now. To catch all to no purpose. It must be for my sins that I love you as I do.

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 ingracious. 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...

Scene ii:
CÉLIMÈNE, ALCESTE, BASQUE

CÉLIMÈNE: What is it? To announce his presence.

BASQUE: Acaste is downstairs.

CÉLIMÈNE: Very well. Show him up. (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?

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...

Scene iii:
BASQUE, ALCESTE, CÉLIMÈNE

BASQUE: Clitandre is here as well, Madame.

ALCESTE: Oh, of course, he would be! (Makes as if to leave.)

CÉLIMÈNE: Where are you running off to? To stop?

ALCESTE: I'm going.

CÉLIMÈNE: Stay. To command.

ALCESTE: What for?

CÉLIMÈNE: Do stay. To keep?

ALCESTE: I can't.

CÉLIMÈNE: I want you to. To investigate.

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) Champagne for the company. (To Alceste)

ALCESTE: Haven't you gone? To challenge, to embarrass

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

CÉLIMÈNE: Hush! To warn

ALCESTE: You shall explain yourself here and now.

CÉLIMÈNE: Have you lost your senses? To put down

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

CÉLIMÈNE: Oh! To dampen

ALCESTE: You must take one side or the other.

CÉLIMÈNE: I suppose this is a joke. To hint

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

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

has been making a perfect fool of himself there at the king's levee.

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. To validate Clitandre

ALCESTE: 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.

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ÉLIANTE (to Philinte): 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.

ALCESTE: 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'.

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

CÉLIMÈNE: 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.

ALCESTE: 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 to him 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?

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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 stomachings. To my mind, it completely ruins the dinners he gives. To break his stomach

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

CÉLIMÈNE: He's a friend of mine. To placate, to stifle, to laugh, to lead on

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 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.

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

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

ALCESTE: Ayel 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.

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.

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Flatterers 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

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.³

ALCESTE: Well for my part I maintain –

CÉLIMÈNE: Suppose we drop the subject now and take a turn in the gallery. What? Are you going gentlemen?

CLITANDRE and ACASTE (together): By no means, Madame. ACASTE (to CÉLIMÈNE): You seem very much concerned lest they should go. (To Clitandre and Acaste:) Leave whenever you please, gentlemen, but I warn you I shall stay until you go.

ALCESTE: 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] to wish, to chide

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

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.

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. (Not in my house) to show away, to quit

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

Scene vi:

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

OFFICER: I need a word with you sir.

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

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

ALCESTE: Who? Me sir?

OFFICER: You sir. In person.

ALCESTE: For what purpose?

PHILINTE: It's that absurd squabble with Oronte.

CÉLIMÈNE (to Philinte): What's this? to grab attention, to belly?

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.

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.

PHILINTE: If you would only be a little more –

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

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 as laughing:) Confound it gentlemen! I was not aware I was so amusing.

CÉLIMÈNE: Go quickly and obey the summons. (protect him) to protect

ALCESTE: I'm going Madame, but I shall come straight back to finish to serve

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 dote 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?

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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? *to appeal to Acaste*
CLITANDRE: It's love that detains us Madame.
CÉLIMÈNE: I heard a carriage below. Do you know who it is? *to redirect to Clitandre*
CLITANDRE: No. *to seek (downstage right)*

Scene iii:
BASQUE, CÉLIMÈNE, ACASTE, CLITANDRE

BASQUE: Arsinoé is coming up to see you Madame. *to kick, to luff*
CÉLIMÈNE: What does that woman want with me? *to see Alceste*
BASQUE: Éliante is talking to her downstairs.
CÉLIMÈNE: What can she be thinking of? Who on earth asked her to come here? *to search, to plain, to seek blame*
ACASTE: She has a reputation everywhere of being the most complete prude. She's so pious that *to offend (pious)* *to take up to thank*
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. *(encouraged)* *to lead* *to encourage* *to get them on my side* *to confirm*

Scene iv:
ARSINOÉ, CÉLIMÈNE

CÉLIMÈNE: Ah! What happy chance brings you here? Madame, in all to *recover, to cover down*
ARSINOÉ: I have been *so* worried about you. *to please*
CÉLIMÈNE: Heaven be praised! I'm so pleased to see you. *to lighten to chime*
ARSINOÉ: They couldn't have chosen a better moment to go.
CÉLIMÈNE: Shall we sit down? *to feel out, to test*
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

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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 unambiguously 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

Scene iv:
ARSINOÉ, CÉLIMÈNE

ARSINOÉ: 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.

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. *(bells in your court)*

ARSINOÉ: 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 *prudence*, 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*.

ARSINOÉ: 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*.

ARSINOÉ: 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 subterfuges: 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 Madame! Let's see how you do it. Show us the secret, try to make yourself attractive and –

ARSINOÉ: 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.)

Scene v:

ALCESTE, ARSINOÉ

ARSINOÉ: 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?

ARSINOÉ: 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!

ARSINOÉ: 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!

ARSINOÉ: 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 I have the qualities necessary for success there or to make my fortune 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.

ARSINOÉ: 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.

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

ARSINOÉ: 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.

ARSINOÉ: 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.

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.

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

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.

ARSINOÉ: 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

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 sonnet.' Whereupon to bring the matter to a conclusion they made them shake hands and left it at that.

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 Célimène 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.

ÉLIANTE: It just shows that love isn't always a matter of temperamental affinities. All the usual ideas of hidden compatibility are proved quite wrong in this case.

PHILINTE: And do you believe, from what you can see, that she loves him?

ÉLIANTE: It's hard to say. How is one to judge whether she's really in love with him? She's not entirely sure of her feelings herself. Sometimes she's in love without knowing it and at other times she fancies she's in love when she isn't at all.

PHILINTE: I'm afraid our friend will have more trouble with this cousin of yours than he imagines. To be honest, if he felt as I do he'd turn his attentions in quite a different direction. He'd be far better advised, Madame, if he took advantage of the feelings you have for him.

ÉLIANTE: Well, I make no bones about it – I think we should be open and honest in such matters. I don't oppose his love for Célimène; on the contrary I encourage it. If it was up to me, he would marry the lady of his choice with my blessing. But if, as may well happen in this case, his love were to encounter some obstacle and Célimène gives her heart to someone else, I might bring myself to accept his addresses without being offended by the fact someone else had already rejected them.

PHILINTE: And I for my part, Madame, do nothing to oppose his high regard for your beauty. He could tell you himself, were he so minded, what I have gone out of my way to say to him on this matter. If, however, they were indeed to marry and you in consequence were not in a position to receive his addresses, then I should do all I could to win for myself those signal favours you now so generously accord him. I should count myself happy if, he having renounced them, you transferred them to me.

ÉLIANTE: You're joking, Philinte.

PHILINTE: Not at all Madame, I say it in all sincerity. I await the opportunity of offering you my entire devotion. All my hopes are directed towards that happy moment.

Scene ii:

ALCESTE, ÉLIANTE, PHILINTE

ALCESTE: Ah Madame, avenge me! Avenge an injury which is more than my constancy can bear!

ÉLIANTE: What is it? Whatever can have upset you so?

ALCESTE: Something beyond mortal experience! A calamity more overwhelming than anything within the realms of nature! It's all over! ... My love ... I don't know how to say it!

ÉLIANTE: Try to calm down a little.

ALCESTE: Merciful heaven! Why should such graces go with such odious, such criminal baseness?

ÉLIANTE: But what can have –

ALCESTE: It's the end of everything. I'm ... I'm betrayed, and utterly undone! Célimène ... who would have believed such a thing ... Célimène has deceived me! She's faithless after all!

ÉLIANTE: Have you some good reason for believing this?

PHILINTE: Maybe it's some hasty misconception? Your jealous temper sometimes makes you imagine things.

ALCESTE: Confound it! Mind your own business, sir! What more certain 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 Oronte, that's the evidence of my betrayal and her shame ... Oronte, whose advances I thought she shunned ... of all my rivals the one I feared least!

PHILINTE: A letter may well give the wrong impression. Sometimes it's not as compromising as it seems.

ALCESTE: You again sir! Be so good as to let me alone and just mind 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 now to heal me of this intolerable hurt. Avenge me against this ungrateful and faithless relative of yours who has betrayed my constant love so despicably. Avenge an action which must surely fill you with horror.

ÉLIANTE: I avenge you? How?

ALCESTE: By accepting my love. Take it Madame! Take the heart she has betrayed. That's how I shall be avenged! I shall punish her by

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, no! 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? *to pick up, to examine, to judge, to study*

CÉLIMÈNE: What's this? Whatever's the matter with you? Why these 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! *to humour, to elude, to bolster*

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? *to embroil, to belittle*

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? *to call out*

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? *to dampen, to deflate*

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

CÉLIMÈNE: Why should I blush? *to confuse*

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? *to humiliate, to mislead*

ALCESTE: Can you look upon it and not blush for the wrong it does me? The whole tone of the letter convicts you!

CÉLIMÈNE: You are, truly, a strange and *foolish* man! *to dismiss*

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*? *to befuddle, to deduce*

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 –

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. *to throw away*

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

CÉLIMÈNE: No, it was written to Oronte. I'd rather you thought that. I delight in his attentions, enjoy his conversation, admire his qualities. *to tease* *to show* *to flick* *to push*

– 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] *to make* *to push*

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, to change 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 to reason 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. *to turn on* *to change* *to reason* *to quit* *to blame* *to hurt* *to soften* *to change* *to hear* *to break* *to punish* *to threaten* *to test*

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. *to look* *to another*

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. *to put out*

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

underplay - to quietly back off

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

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?

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.

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.

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?

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.

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?

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!

CÉLIMÈNE: What's behind all this? *to calm*

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

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. *to reason with* *to appease* *to control*

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?

Act V

Scene i:

ALCESTE, PHILINTE

ALCESTE: I tell you, my mind's made up.

PHILINTE: But however serious this blow may be, do you really need to...

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, a rogue, whose scandalous past is notorious, emerges triumphant! 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 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. 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!

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 iniquity 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.

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.)

Scene ii:

ORONTE, CÉLIMÈNE, ALCESTE

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 renounce any further claim to her hand.

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

ORONTE: 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? *To himself off*

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. *To stop To assist To draw down To shame To grieve To correct To prepare*

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 to thank To thank To thank To challenge To counter To escape

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.

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.

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 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 Celimène) 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 Clitandre 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 Celimène): 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 reproach me with anything you care to name. I'm in the wrong 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. She expects anger.

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 abject 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 Celimène) 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 fortune 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 are everything to me, I reject your proposition. This bitter insult releases me from your ignoble fetters for ever. (*Exit Cléopâtre. Alceste turns to Éliante.*) Madame, your beauty is graced by countless virtues. I have never known you to be anything but sincere. I have long 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, 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.*)

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 1688 at the Théâtre du
Palais Royal by the King's Players*

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The Misanthrope Script

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VITA

Sarah Elizabeth James was born in Lake Charles, Louisiana on October 21, 1989 and grew up in Madison, Mississippi. Her mother, Faye James, has taught music, practiced law, and is now working for the State of Mississippi Attorney General's office. Her father, David James, owns David James Allstate Insurance Agency in Biloxi, Mississippi. Her older sister, Rachel James, is currently pursuing a career in medicine at the University of Tennessee in Memphis, Tennessee.

Sarah Beth attended Madison Central High School and went on to obtain her B.A. in Communication: Public Relations with a minor in Spanish from Mississippi State University. In 2010, she was named Miss Mississippi 2010, and traveled the country as a representative of the state and her platform: organ and tissue donation.

At her alma mater, Sarah Beth was involved in a number of theatre productions. After graduating from Mississippi State University in 2013, she relocated to New Orleans, Louisiana to pursue a Master of Fine Arts in Film and Theatre Performance from the University of New Orleans. With the guidance of the UNO Film and Theatre department faculty, as well as her colleagues, Sarah Beth has worked to hone her craft and develop her process during her time in this program.

Over the past four years, Sarah Beth has also studied Spanish at Universidad de Alcalá in Alcalá, Spain, film acting through the New York Film Academy in Florence, Italy, and playwriting and acting through the University of New Orleans in Cork, Ireland.

While at the University of New Orleans, Sarah Beth has worked as a graduate assistant in the scene shop, working in scenic design and construction under the expertise of Kevin Griffith and Diane Baas. She has also taught multiple Acting I classes for undergraduate students, has

served as the Historian for Lakefront Players (UNO's student theatre organization), founded and has coordinated the Risky Business Monday Night Showcase, and has been involved in UNO Theatre productions as well as several UNO graduate student films each semester.

Upon graduation, she hopes to use these experiences in furthering her endeavor to find artistic fulfillment through theatre, film, and wherever else the wind takes her. The joy is in the journey.