

**“Pseudo-wits and polished frauds”:
Directing Molière’s *The Learned Ladies***

by

Patrick Gauthier

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ABSTRACT

“Pseudo-wits and polished frauds”: *Directing Molière’s The Learned Ladies* examines the preparation, pre-production, and rehearsal process behind *The Learned Ladies*, staged at the University of British Columbia’s Frederic Wood Theatre from February 7-16, 2008.

As detailed in the following paper, my objective was to examine the text through the lens of the *commedia dell’arte* and its influence on the playwright’s characters and dramaturgy, as well as Molière’s feminism. In the rehearsal hall, my focus was on actor creation and “play.”

Chapter 1 summarizes my pre-production research, and includes biographical information on both the playwright and translator, as well as the above noted *commedia* and early feminist influences, while Chapter 2 provides a detailed directorial analysis of Molière’s text. A journal – chronicling the entire production process from early design meetings through rehearsals and the run of the show – makes up Chapter 3. Finally, Chapter 4 is a short reflection on the process, outlining major shifts in my thinking and technique, and concluding with my final thoughts on the production.

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And for Suzanne, who, when I told her I was directing a Molière for my thesis, replied:
“cool.”

“If the business of comedy is to correct the vices of men by entertaining them, I don’t see why there should be any exceptions.”

– Jean-Baptiste Poquelin (Molière)

“Molière really pumps my nads.”

– Bender (Judd Nelson), *The Breakfast Club*

CHAPTER ONE – Research

“Despite two hundred and fifty years of criticism,” writes W. G. Moore, “we are still forced to stand in uncomprehending bewilderment before [Molière’s] work.”¹ Indeed, despite volumes dedicated to his life and work and productions mounted annually across the continent and overseas, directors, actors, critics, and scholars are continually questioning the playwright’s motives and intentions, with the ideological content of his plays front and centre in any debate. Patronized by Louis XIV but also a subversive, accused of immorality and moralizing, championed by the left for his progressive secularism and by the right for his staunch defense of monarchical tradition, Jean-Baptiste Poquelin created contemporary, relevant theatre for “a public endlessly fascinated with its own image” who both adored his plays for their timeliness and detested them when the target (often) hit too close to home.²

As political as he was satiric, throughout his career Molière “fought for control of the political apparatus that was the theatre”³; as it gained more power and became increasingly pervasive he found himself in the centre of controversies surrounding censorship, moral outrage, and the Catholic church, never retreating from his objective of holding a public mirror to society: “one wants these portraits to be lifelike,” he is purported to have said. “And you haven’t accomplished a thing if you don’t make the

¹ W.G. Moore, *Molière: A New Criticism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), p. 27.

² Larry F. Norman, “Molière as satirist,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Molière*, eds. David Bradby and Andrew Calder (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 58.

³ Larry W. Riggs, *Molière and Plurality* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1989), p. 1.

audience recognise [sic] the people of your time.”⁴ Molière believed every one fit material for satire – servants and masters, children and parents, students and teachers, peasants and bourgeois, clergy and congregation, all of whom were the object of the author’s ridicule for their hypocrisy, greed, selfishness, and lust.

Despite the heavy transgressions of his targets, Molière chose comedy – “to correct the vices of men by entertaining them”⁵ – and in doing so became the greatest comic dramatist of his century, and arguably the most accomplished of all time.

1.1 BIOGRAPHY

*“We do not know this great Man, and the feeble sketches we have of him are all wide off the mark, or so lacking in depth that they are not enough to allow us to know him as he was. The general public has heard untold numbers of inaccurate stories about him. There are few among his contemporaries who, in order to enjoy the reflected glory of being associated with him, have not invented adventures that they claim to have shared with him.”*⁶

Despite an abundance of scholarship on the public life and work of Molière, very little is known about the playwright’s private life. Some three hundred years after Jean-Léonor de Grimarest’s *Vie de M. de Molière*, conjecture and rumour remain the basis on which most “facts” about his off-stage life are based. Academic debates continue over his time spent touring in the southern provinces (where did he go? What was being performed?), and the nature of his relationship with his young wife, Armande (was she the daughter of his mistress? Was she *his* daughter?), and his death (did he die *on* stage,

⁴ Norman, p. 58.

⁵ Quoted in: Richard Parish, “How (and why) not to take Molière too seriously,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Molière*, p. 72.

⁶ Quoted in: Marie-Claude Canova-Green, “The career strategy of an actor turned playwright: ‘de l’audace, encore de l’audace, toujours de l’audace,’” in *The Cambridge Companion to Molière*, p. 1.

or in the wings? Were his final breaths used to speak his own words, or those belonging to one of his characters?), among others, with no resolution – be it a long-lost returning relative once thought lost at sea, or letter from a trusted friend – in sight. But while biographical controversy forms a good portion of the artist’s twenty-first century identity, Molière scholars are able to agree on a number of facts about his life.

“Jean-Baptiste Poquelin,” writes biographer Virginia Scott, “may have been one of the first (though certainly not the last) bright and promising middle-class children to deeply disappoint a parent... one of the first to speak those dreaded words: ‘I want to be an actor.’”⁷ Born to bourgeois parents Jean Poquelin and Marie Cressé in January 1622, young Molière was expected to, after his father, become *tapissier* to the king. And after completing his studies under the Jesuits at the *Collège de Clermont* as well as a subsequent law degree, 1641 saw Jean-Baptiste ready “to carry on the trade in rugs and hangings which [had] been built up by bourgeois thrift and caninness.”⁸ Before he could commit himself to the family profession, however, he would renounce his position, leaving his duties for his brother. The exact impetus behind his decision is another matter for debate, but it is also an area where there is surprising scholarly consensus: while the influence of the plays produced by the Jesuits and the effect his maternal grandfather’s ushering him to the theatre whenever the opportunity arose could fill a journal article or three, the influence of Madeleine Béjart is not be ignored.

⁷ Virginia Scott, *Molière: A Theatrical Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 31.

⁸ Hallam Walker, *Molière* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1971), p. 13.

After meeting under unknown circumstances sometime in 1642, Molière and Béjart would continue a “professional and personal liaison”⁹ for the remainder of their lives. Described as “a woman of considerable charm and theatrical ability,”¹⁰ Virginia Scott notes her age (she was four years older than Molière) and involvement in “the fashionable world of politics, literature, and sexual intrigue while Jean-Baptiste was still a schoolboy”¹¹ made their meeting unlikely. But meet they did, and soon afterwards the two, along with her elder brother and nineteen year-old sister and a few of their friends, founded the *Théâtre Illustre*, launching a new theatre company on the already-crowded Parisian theatre scene. The troupe, however, “was young and mostly inexperienced and more than a little presumptuous”¹² in believing they would be able to compete with the long-established *Hôtel de Bourgogne* and *Théâtre du Marais*, and soon after their formation faced financial difficulties. Without a permanent space or many material resources, the group was forced to rent tennis courts on which to play as well as costumes, props, and the like. To build audiences the company took an aggressive approach, and “responding to fashion and taste” put on works that were to showcase Madeleine’s talents.¹³ Unfortunately, these plays were not yet in the public domain, and while artistically successful, added to the company’s growing debt. Eventually, the nonchalance with which the *Illustre* theatre borrowed money would catch up with them, as stiff competition and subsequent low box-office takings led to the confiscation of much of their sets and costumes, as well as the brief imprisonment of Molière – who by

⁹ Walker, p. 14.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹¹ Scott, p. 32.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 52.

¹³ Canova-Green, p. 4.

1645 had taken over leadership of the company – for debt. The company was forced to disband, but as Canova-Green argues, the collapse of the *Théâtre Illustre* “was not a result of failure to attract the public, of choosing the wrong plays, or of poor acting. They had held their own professionally against the other companies. Their problems were purely financial.”¹⁴

Afterwards, Molière left Paris with Béjart and the two joined the company of the *duc d’Épernon*, which was touring provincial France. It would be thirteen years until the two returned to Paris, a period during which the company – Molière would assume its leadership towards 1650 – would find patronage with nobility in the southern provinces before eventually heading back to Paris. There is little record of the group’s activities while on tour, and neither is there much known about their repertory, other than it included “those little plays which had earned him a good reputation, and which gave great pleasure in the provinces.”¹⁵ It is also known that it was while traveling Molière encountered the Italian theatrical tradition of the *commedia dell’arte*. And while a young Jean-Baptiste had been exposed to the Italian comedy as a boy, “he was now directly challenged to create theatre in this mode.”¹⁶ It was this style from which the playwright’s early farces – *L’Étourdi ou les Contretemps* and *Le Dépit amoureux* – drew much of their influence. The success of these and the company’s other productions (including plays by Corneille and Racine) caused some stir in Paris and was able to secure the King’s brother as a patron, making their return to the capital inevitable.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.4-5.

¹⁵ Quoted in: Canova-Green, p. 6.

¹⁶ Walker, p. 17.

A 1658 production of the now lost *Le Docteur amoureux* for Louis XIV gained Molière and his partners a playing space in the *Petit-Bourbon* theatre, which they were to share with a company of Italian actors until being moved to the Palais-Royal in 1660. The sharing of space with the *commedia* actors would prove seminal in Molière's artistic development, affecting not only the playwright's dramaturgy, but also the troupe's programming. While initially hoping to produce tragedies as well as the farces on which Molière had built his reputation in the provinces, the company's programming shifted as the box-office was always better when their bill – like those of the Italians – featured comedies, either as the evening's feature or after a tragedy. Still very much in process of being codified, "comedy," Canova-Green writes, "lent itself to innovation," and Molière aimed to be at the height of such innovation.¹⁷ It was in this period that Molière experimented with short farces, as well as three-act comedies and eventually his five-act *grande comedies*.

As his fame grew, so did the jealousy of rival authors, actors, and artists. *L'École des femmes* was attacked from all sides and *Tartuffe* found itself twice banned. The protection of the King – the company was now known as *Troupe du Roi* – shielded Molière from many of the attacks, but also limited the time he was able to spend performing in Paris. Often called to court, *Troupe du Roi* became the sole provider of the monarch's entertainment, "from light after-dinner distractions during the hunting season to grand festivals in the palace gardens."¹⁸ Now ill, the demands of travel and producing plays for the court as well as the Parisian public was beginning to take its toll, as did the

¹⁷ Canova-Green, p. 7.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

death of his “lover, his wife in all but name for nineteen years,” Madeleine Béjart, in 1672.¹⁹

Despite this, his last play, *Le Malade imaginaire*, was one of Molière’s most successful. Unfortunately, he would not survive to reap the benefits. Despite his worsening illness, Molière took to the stage to play the lead, and during the production’s fourth performance – on February 17, 1673, exactly a year after Madeleine’s death – he collapsed on stage and would die at home later that evening. Since no priest would grant him the last rites, only the King’s intervention allowed him to be buried in a church cemetery, which was done at night for reasons of secrecy and to prevent a spectacle. Nevertheless, the funeral procession “moved tranquilly up the street to the light of a hundred torches.”²⁰

After a week of mourning, the company continued playing, ending their season on Easter weekend. The *Palais-Royal* was handed over to another company, and the Molière-less *Troupe du Roi* was relocated to the *Hôtel Guénégaud*, and a royal decree in 1677 merged the company with that from the *Hôtel de Bourgogne*, forming the *Comédie-Française* where, says Walker, “he lived on... so forcefully that no other spirit could so fully and naturally dominate the French repertory.”²¹

1.2 RICHARD WILBUR

It would be difficult to discuss *The Learned Ladies* without devoting space to the play’s translator, Richard Wilbur, whose work on Molière is continually lauded for its brilliance.

¹⁹ Scott, p. 246.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

²¹ Walker, p. 175.

A two-time Pulitzer Prize winner and former American Poet Laureate, Wilbur was born March 1, 1921, and has had such success with his translations of Molière's canon that his versions have become the "expected translation[s]" when staging his productions.²² The son of an artist, Wilbur served in France during World War Two before attending Amherst College and Harvard University, where he would later teach before eventually settling at Wesleyan University in Connecticut as a professor.

Wilbur first made a name for himself with his translation of *The Misanthrope*, which he began while working in New Mexico as a Guggenheim Fellow. Hoping to write a verse play, Wilbur "had no luck at all brining the characters on stage and making them talk in anything but the most stereotyped manner."²³ Looking to better acquaint himself with theatre, he turned to Molière because, in his words, "I thought I might learn something about what poetic drama might be by translating him."²⁴ That first translation of *The Misanthrope* was published in 1955 and was produced by the Poets Theatre in Cambridge that same year. "People began to think of me as an available translator,"²⁵ Wilbur recalled in an interview with Edward Honig, and translations of *Tartuffe*, *The School for Wives*, and eventually *The Learned Ladies* followed.

Describing the process of translation as "a joy but a real drudgery too,"²⁶ Wilbur equates his process to that of a bricklayer: "I have to slog along from couplet to couplet,

²² Laura Shea, "The Learned Ladies ('Les Femmes Savantes')," *Theatre Journal* 44, no. 1 (March 1992), p. 113.

²³ David Curry, "An Interview with Richard Wilbur," in *Conversations with Richard Wilbur*, ed. William Butts (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1990), p. 12.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

²⁵ Edward Honig, "A Conversation with Richard Wilbur," *MLN* 91, no. 5 (Oct. 1976), p. 1087.

²⁶ Christopher Bogan and Carl Kaplan, "Interview: Richard Wilbur," in *Conversations with Richard Wilbur*, p. 155.

building it very slowly,” he tells John Graham in a 1973 interview. “You have to think a long time before you get it. Almost always, if you are patient enough, you will find something that will allow you to be faithful, if not to every word, to the thought. I think the important thing is to translate thought by thought.”²⁷ Wilbur will discuss the merits of his “thought for thought” method versus a “word for word” style of translation in further interviews, stating that the process allows him to “chuck particular words which don’t have handsome equivalents in your own language,” and helps him compensate for the “poverty of rhyme” in English.²⁸ Nonetheless, the process is long and sometimes frustrating. “One clearly can’t translate so many French Alexandrines into English rhymed couplets in a state of continual inspiration,” he tells Christopher Bogan and Carl Kaplan, and that he aims to translate between four and eight “decent” lines in a day.²⁹

At first reluctant to tackle *Les Femmes savantes*, because he felt the play was “intolerably unfair and patronizing to women... and would produce riots in the theatres,”³⁰ Wilbur was convinced otherwise when a number of his friends asked the poet to take another look at the text, and he was drawn in. Besides the sense of personal satisfaction he derives from completing a project, the translation – and his others – he hopes, can serve to make the plays of Molière more accessible:

I think it’s important to have versions of Molière, or Cervantes, of all sorts of things which will make it possible for the common reader, by whom I mean somebody who really is a reader and is to be respected, to commune with the past in a lively way... there’s a very good side effect to it; it’s very useful to the culture.³¹

²⁷ John Graham, “Richard Wilbur,” in *Conversations with Richard Wilbur*, p. 111.

²⁸ Honig, pp. 1091-1095.

²⁹ Bogan and Kaplan, p. 155.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

1.3 INFLUENCE OF THE *COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE*

Much has been made of the influence the *commedia dell'arte* had on the work of Molière. In his book *Molière and the Italian Theatrical Tradition*, author Philip A. Wadsworth argues while many French actors and playwrights borrowed from the Italians, “none of them except Molière, however, really understood or exploited the comic potential of the Italian popular theatre,”³² while Richard Andrews notes, “Molière was compared more than once in his lifetime to contemporary Italian actors – sometimes perhaps as a compliment, at other times as an accusation of plagiarism.”³³ Any research dedicated to the playwright makes at least a passing reference to the influence of the Italian actors, with whom for a time Molière shared a theatre, had on his dramaturgy. But as Molière and *commedia* scholars are quick to point out, the details surrounding this influence are hazy. And while many potential sources may be lost to the contemporary researcher, a brief comparison of the elements of *commedia* within the plays of Molière – specifically *The Learned Ladies* – will help illuminate the connection just a little more.

Researchers debate as to where and when the young Jean-Baptiste may have first encountered an Italian troupe. While it is doubtless that his company would have crossed paths with a traveling Italian company in the thirteen years he was touring the provinces, it was not until a brief stay playing Lyons in 1652 that he was to have more than passing contact with the foreign actors. After returning to Paris he would twice share a theatre with a company of Italians: first, in 1658, after being housed in the *Petit-Bourbon*, and

³² Philip A. Wadsworth, *Molière and the Italian Theatrical Tradition* (York, SC: French Literature Publications Company, 1977), p. 82.

³³ Richard Andrews, “Molière, Commedia Dell’arte, and the Question of Influence in Early Modern European Theatre,” in *Modern Languages Review* 100, no. 2 (2005), p. 444.

again later after Louis XIV relocated the troupe to the *Palais-Royal*. It was this prolonged exposure and “spirit of friendly rivalry”³⁴ that pushed him to not only borrow from the *commedia* tradition but also elaborate upon it.

While the broad comedy and stock characters of the *commedia dell’arte* can be easily found in the plays of Molière, another Italian form, the *commedia erudita*, was just as familiar to the playwright. Unlike its more popular improvised cousin, the *commedia erudita* was a literary, published movement, receiving its name from writers and scholars – such as Machiavelli – hoping to adapt and imitate the plays of Terrence and Plautus. Adhering to the Aristotelian unities of time, place, and action, the works of *commedia erudita* tended to be full-length plays, described by Wadsworth as “five-act comedies of intrigue in which ardent young men seek to gain possession of the girls they love... the heroes must maneuver against their fathers, usually stern and miserly old men... [and] obstacles must disappear so that the young lovers can marry at the end of the play.”³⁵ The *commedia erudita* shared many traits with the *commedia dell’arte* (including but not limited to the use of stock characters and a conventional unit setting such as a market square or street corner), but where the two genres differed was their handling of plot. Whereas in the *commedia dell’arte* plot was often little more than an excuse around which to tie the actors’ *lazzi*, productions in the *commedia erudita* tradition paid much stricter attention to the intrigues surrounding its characters with complex, multi-faceted plots and stories. “Skillful handling of a sustained intrigue was the prime factor,” writes Peter Hampshire Nurse, but he is ultimately unimpressed: “it is the kind of literature one

³⁴ Wadsworth, p. 81.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

might expect from scholars rather than theatre professionals.”³⁶ Regardless of the quality of the *erudita* plays, their effect on Molière’s dramaturgy is evident in his later work, as Moore points out, when Molière was unable “to construct a play other than by a complicated plot.”³⁷

Modern audiences, likely more familiar with the *commedia dell’arte*, will more easily appreciate its influence on the playwright’s canon. Maybe the most easily recognizable of these influences is Molière’s use of stock characters. While it is easy to see Pantalone in *The School for Wives*’ domineering Arnolphe or Dottore in *The Learned Ladies*’ Trissotin, Alvin Eustis argues “Molière creates a repertory for himself of stock characters, working out his variants of valets, maidservants, fathers, young lovers, and heroines,”³⁸ feeding off the Italian tradition of the stock character, but not bound by its stock types, the characters in his plays (especially the later ones) represented an evolutionary step forward from their Italian ancestors. This is not to say he eschewed the Italian types completely. The crafty servant Sganarelle – played by Molière – has obvious ties to the wily Arlecchino, and the origins of previously mentioned Arnolphe and Trissotin are also easily traced back to their *commedia* roots, as many of the speeches delivered by the patriarch of *School for Wives* could just as easily come from the mouth of an overbearing *dell’arte* father.³⁹ And just as he did with the *commedia*’s *zanni*, Molière also borrowed its young lovers. A consistent trope of the Italian theatre, he used them, as did the Italians, as a plot device around which to build his action: generally

³⁶ Peter Hampshire Nurse, *Molière and the Comic Spirit* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1990), p. 34.

³⁷ Moore, p. 68-9.

³⁸ Alvin Eustis, *Molière as Ironic Contemplator* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1973), p. 147.

³⁹ Andrews, p. 449.

surrounding a wedding opposed by the young woman's father. Eustis contends that Molière's lovers were the most traditional of all the characters he borrowed from the *commedia*, going so far as to declare: "in not one of his plays is there a truly original young hero."⁴⁰

It was not only the characters of the *commedia* from which Molière drew inspiration. He also borrowed and built upon the structure of the Italian plays. Their influences, states Wadsworth, "are to be found primarily in the realm of dramaturgy and technique... to the patterns of love and intrigue, so important in his earliest plays."⁴¹ Indeed, Molière's dramaturgy can be seen as an extension of the Italian's. His *grande comedies* borrow their five acts from the *commedia erudita*, and structures of dialogue used throughout his oeuvre can be traced back to *commedia dell'arte*. Frequently using recurring patterns of back-and-forth dialogue, which Richard Andrews describes as "elastic,"⁴² Molière borrows a method by which the *dell'arte* improvisers would construct a scene. These elastic scenes – more often than not an argument between two characters with one taking a "yes" stance while the other takes a "no;" or set up as a tension building device where one character holds information over another and delays the reveal for both their scene partner and the audience – can be found in the playwright's earlier farces and all the way through to his final play, *Le Malade imaginaire*. Whereas in the *commedia dell'arte* the actors would improvise their way through these scenes, shortening or extending the sequences based on factors such as comic inspiration and audience reaction while waiting for the perfect opportunity to deliver their punch line, in his plays Molière

⁴⁰ Eustis, p. 148

⁴¹ Wadsworth, p. 109.

⁴² Andrews, p. 450.

has simply frozen for all time, on the page, one possible performance version for each of these elastic scenes.⁴³ Wadsworth agrees, citing the repetition and symmetry as seen in Molière's elastic scenes as "a striking and characteristic feature of his comic technique" borrowed from and strongly reflecting that of the Italians.⁴⁴

These influences are apparent throughout *The Learned Ladies*. In terms of structure, the oft-used "contested marriage" plot is perhaps the play's strongest link to *commedia* roots, and uses Andrews' elastic scenes to comic effect, most notably in Act 2, Scene 6, when Philaminte withholds her reason for firing Martine as Chrysale grows increasingly worried about which crime the 'strumpet' has committed. Molière has also borrowed liberally from the *dell'arte* stock characters, with the oft-mentioned Trissotin-Dottore connection being the most obvious, but far from the only link. Rival poet Vadius also resembles the pedantic Dottore, bawdy maid Martine has similarities to serving-wench Columbina (though Martine's function in the plot of *The Learned Ladies* is less than what that of Columbina's may have been), and Philaminte, while a woman, plays the role of autocratic parent generally reserved for Pantalone. Critic Albert Bermel contests that Chrysale also has his ancestry in the *commedia*, as he reveals traces of the "impotent braggart, the Capitano from the *commedia dell'arte*,"⁴⁵ while Henriette and Clitandre take the place of the young lovers of the *commedia* as the young lovers of this piece.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 451.

⁴⁴ Wadsworth, p. 113.

⁴⁵ Albert Bermel, *Molière's Theatrical Bounty: A New View of the Plays* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990), p. 207.

Molière's debt to the Italians and the traditions of the *commedia erudita* and *dell'arte* is inarguable; so much so that Richard Andrews has proclaimed the Frenchman "the supreme Italian comic dramatist whom Italy itself never produced."⁴⁶

1.4 MOLIÈRE'S CHARACTERS

While their lineage can be traced to the stock types of the *commedia dell'arte*, Molière's characters begin to differ from their ancestors through their psychology. *Raisonneurs*, *ridicules*, monomaniacs, and *barbons*, the parents, lovers, servants, and public officials, "for Molière a character is a person who is powerfully unified by the domination of a passion or a vice that destroys or subdues all other likes and dislikes of his soul."⁴⁷

Maybe the most recognizable – and most debated – of Molière's characters is that of the *raisonneur*. Simply described by seminal Molière critic W.G. Moore as "the most reasonable character in any given play,"⁴⁸ this definition has become further elaborated upon – and complicated – since Moore proposed it in his 1949 book. Described as comic foils, spokesman for the norm, and the representative of the average spectator,⁴⁹ perhaps the simplest and most telling of these elaborations comes from Peter Hampshire Nurse, who describes the *raisonneur* as one who would "argue the issue with the comic lead."⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Andrews, p. 459.

⁴⁷ Gustave Lanson, "Molière and Farce," in *Tulane Drama Review* 8, no. 2 (Winter 1963), p. 147.

⁴⁸ Quoted in: Robert McBride, *The Sceptical Vision of Molière* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1977), p. 5.

⁴⁹ Harold C. Knutson, *Molière: An Archetypal Approach* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), p. 175.

⁵⁰ Nurse, p. 18.

The debate surrounding Molière's *raisonneurs* pertains primarily to their function. The general consensus around the character is that he (or, occasionally she) represents the playwright's point of view, serving as a call for moderation among what Molière perceived as the excesses of society. One could then be tempted to look to the *raisonneur* to determine that of which the author approved and disapproved, and compose a list of his ideas.⁵¹ But it is a method with which Moore finds folly, and he has an ally in Robert McBride, who finds this strategy of categorizing Molière's characters "overlooks [their] presence in the play, and, more importantly, the role he plays, which varies as the play's circumstances demand."⁵² How then, should we examine the reasonable character? Maybe the safest lens through which to study them is not solely from the playwright's point-of-view, but in relation to his *ridicules*.

If they are going to serve as a foil, the *raisonneur*, of course, must have a less-reasonable character off which to play (or maybe the less reasonable character needs someone more reasonable; either way). The *ridicule* is, most simply, the less-reasonable counterpart to the *raisonneur*. And while debate surrounds the function of – and sometimes the character representing – Molière's voice of reason, there is no debate when it comes to the ridiculous ones. Generally characters of authority (or presumed authority), Molière uses their absurdity to mock "authoritarian discourses,"⁵³ while using the foil of the *raisonneur* to draw attention to the excesses of the *ridicule*. Still, one should not be tempted to take the stance of the *raisonneur* as gospel for the playwright's views. Instead, the two serve to balance one another, allowing Molière to present two

⁵¹ Moore, p. 86.

⁵² McBride, p. 6.

⁵³ Michael S. Koppish, *Rivalry and the Disruption of Order in Molière's Theatre* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2004), p. 14.

sides to an argument: “Molière is the creator both of the so-called *ridicule* and of his apparently more reasonable counterpart, the *raisonneur*, and that consequently his experience of his play is neither one-sided nor fragmentary but total and absolute.”⁵⁴

Despite the differences between the *raisonneurs* and the *ridicules*, the two types share a trait: monomania. Owing something to the *commedia* tradition, Molière’s major characters can aptly be described as monomaniacs in their universal obsessions. Defined by Philip Wadsworth as “inflexible creatures,”⁵⁵ the characters exhibiting monomania tend to be, but are by no means limited to his *ridicules*. While Arnolphe of *L’École des femmes* is rightly designated a monomaniac in his obsession over keeping his young wife away from the men, so could *The Learned Ladies’* Clitandre be called the same for his dogged pursuit of Henriette’s hand. In addition to their single-minded obsession, these characters share another trait: they are incapable of reform. As Shaw rightly notes, “there are no conversions in Molière’s theatre.”⁵⁶ Truly, when one studies the characters of Molière’s work, winners and losers, they are linked through their inability to change. Either the character achieves their objective and are victorious, or “when the ending brings a happy solution to the problems of everyone else, they must vanish from sight or become victims of an elaborate deception.”⁵⁷ This is an important similarity because, as Koppisch highlights, in Molière’s theatre “characters locating themselves at opposite poles assume a striking sameness.”⁵⁸

⁵⁴ McBride, p. 6.

⁵⁵ Wadsworth, p. 108.

⁵⁶ Shaw, p. 32.

⁵⁷ Wadsworth, p. 108.

⁵⁸ Koppisch, p. 156.

But what of the characters in *The Learned Ladies*? While not every character falls into one of the prescribed categories, the play is rife with monomaniacs, as well as the odd *ridicule* and a *raisonneur* (or two). It is perhaps easiest to locate the monomaniacs in the play, as it could be argued that each of the major characters – Philaminte, Chrysale, Clitandre, Henriette, Trissotin – fall into this category. The lovers, with their steadfast desire to marry; Chrysale, their ally; Philaminte, and her designs of seeing her daughter wed Trissotin; and the poet himself, in his pursuit of Henriette’s dowry. Of the five, one could dispute the inclusion of Philaminte and Chrysale. For the latter, his constant vacillation may preclude him from being a monomaniac in the truest sense of the term, but his flip-flops are a result of the character’s unending search for peace in the household, and therefore could be seen as serving that particular mania. As for Philaminte, she presents somewhat of a different problem, as at the end of the play she defies the “no conversions” edict. “She is at least capable of admitting she has been taken in by Trissotin and of recognizing Clitandre’s merit,” notes David Shaw.⁵⁹ Even though Philaminte maintains her stance on learning and erudition, she is able to temper her monomania, showing her to be less ridiculous than some of the playwright’s other characters.

Because of this semi-conversion, fleshing out the ridiculous and reasonable characters present somewhat of a different challenge. One could point to one of Armande, Philaminte, or Trissotin as the object of ridicule. Armande’s inability to make up her mind about Clitandre, coupled with her representing “the absurdity of the claims made by

⁵⁹ Shaw, p. 32.

the more pretentious salons,”⁶⁰ make her a candidate, but her punishment at play’s end is too lenient. Her mother is another candidate, though as demonstrated, Philaminte’s changing temperament moderates her slightly. As well, she is much closer to Molière’s other domestic tyrants – or *barbons* – serving more to block the will of the lovers than act as the object of Molière’s scorn. It is safe to conclude then that Trissotin, named and modeled after the Abbé Cotin, is the *ridicule*, and pedantry Molière’s target.

The *raisonneur* of *The Learned Ladies* is more difficult to flesh out, with critics divided on the issue. McBride suggests Henriette for the role, suggesting her well-balanced outlook on life and down-to-earth view on things as her primary assets.⁶¹ Knutson agrees, but adds Clitandre to the mix: “as spokesmen for the comic norm, they participate in all of the key ideological confrontations.”⁶² Alvin Eustis agrees with Knutson about the presence of two *raisonneurs* in the play, but the authors disagree on who should be considered. There is consensus among the two on Clitandre, but Eustis makes a case for Ariste over Henriette.⁶³ An argument could also be made, perhaps, for Chrysale, as one could interpret his quest for peace and stability as a call for moderation among both the pedants and lovers. An obsession with getting the better of his wife, however, makes the label less than apt.

1.5 LES PRÉCIEUSES

Satirized by Molière in *The Learned Ladies* (as well as his earlier one-act farce, *Les Précieuses ridicules*), the “precious” movement was not an exclusively literary one, as is

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁶¹ McBride, p. 188.

⁶² Knutson, p. 87.

⁶³ Eustis, p. 191.

commonly believed, but also an early feminist campaign aimed at improving women's access to education. Prominent for less than a decade in the mid-seventeenth century, *les précieuses* hoped not only to ease the restrictions placed on female education, but also to improve the conditions of women in marriage. In *Woman Triumphant*, author Ian Maclean describes the goals of the *précieuses* as “freedom from the dangers and discomfort of childbirth, freedom from the tyranny of parents and husbands, freedom, moreover, to enter into sentimental liaisons outside marriage without fear of reproach or jealousy.”⁶⁴

The most pressing feminist issue of the age, as previously cited, was education, and the *précieuses* hoped to use broader female scholarship as a means of gaining greater social independence. As for the reformation of marriage, the women had two goals: the first was to change the institution itself, and the other a changing of women's role within it. Because women were denied the ability to choose their partner, the *précieuses* argued marriage condemned women, offering a so-called “partnership” without regard for either physical or emotional attraction. Further, since the husband would hold ultimate control over his wife's affairs, the precious women hoped to gain a more balanced union through the sharing of domestic authority.⁶⁵

The merits of *préciosité* are a matter of debate, however. Marcel Gutwirth proposes that “preciosity, as far as we can see, profited neither literature nor society,” as the women overestimated the power of literature to change the world.⁶⁶ Indeed, most

⁶⁴ Ian Maclean, *Woman Triumphant: Feminism in French Literature, 1610-1652* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 117.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 114-15.

⁶⁶ Marcel Gutwirth, “Molière and the Woman Question: Les Précieuses ridicules, L'Ecole des Femmes, Les Femmes savants,” in *Theatre Journal* 34, no. 3 (Oct., 1982),

accounts of the précieux point out only their ridiculous mannerisms and over-the-top love of poetry and Platonic ideology. The women themselves were “a self-confessed *élite*” whose salons could take the principle of refinement too far,⁶⁷ and would occasionally – as Molière caricatures in *The Learned Ladies* – be prone to fits over poetry. Their meetings, as described by seventeenth century French critic Charles de Saint-Évremond, were the “gathering together of a small number of persons where a few, with taste and delicacy, threw the others into a ridiculous excess of delicacy.”⁶⁸

Préciosité, however, offered women more than a weekly social event, acting as a “system of existence conceived of as an antidote to their plight as wards and wives,”⁶⁹ and, as Maclean demonstrates, its importance lies in its origin as a movement instigated by women, who though “often extravagant in their language, arguments, and aims, are fundamentally in harmony with the position they are debating, as they are speaking on their own behalf.”⁷⁰

1.6 MOLIÈRE’S FEMINISM

Molière’s treatment of the *précieuses* and his perceived misogyny recalls the most heated debate surrounding *The Learned Ladies*: is the play sexist? Critics have come down on both sides of the issue, arguing on the one hand that Molière presents a progressive view on seventeenth century women’s politics, the other being a charge the

p. 347.

⁶⁷ David Shaw, *Les Précieuses Ridicules* (London: Grant & Cutler, Ltd., 1986), p. 37.

⁶⁸ Quoted in: Dorothy McDougall, *Madeleine de Scudéry: Her Romantic Life and Death* (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1938), p. 20.

⁶⁹ Maclean, p. 152.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

author is reaffirming and condoning a patriarchal society through the play's themes and characters.

Off-stage, Molière and his colleagues took a liberal approach to administration of the theatre company; "sexual equality was the rule at all meetings" with male and female members having equal say over the financial and artistic direction of the company. Though the female actors would often leave the task of play selection to the men, this practice was often criticized, since though reluctant to attend the play-selection meeting women were thought equally "able to judge a play as a man."⁷¹ This attitude, it can be argued, was carried from Molière's off-stage world to the worlds he created on-stage.

In her article "Teaching Ignorance: L'Ecole des Femmes," Barbara Johnson contends that the notion of femininity and education are surprisingly intertwined in the seventeenth century: "the burning feminist issue was not yet voting or working, but getting an education equal to a man's."⁷² And while she is writing in relation to *L'École des femmes* her arguments can be equally applied to *The Learned Ladies*, considering the plays shared thematics. Though Molière raises a contemporary feminist issue in the two plays, the author argues his treatment of the issue does little to advance the female cause: "the assertion of Molière's feminism has indeed become almost a commonplace of academic criticism," she writes, but "what has been seen as Molière's feminism is actually a form of benevolent paternalism and not in any sense a plea for the reorganization of the relations between the sexes."⁷³ While proposing that women should

⁷¹ Jan Clarke, "The Material conditions of Molière's stage," in *The Cambridge Companion to Molière*, pp. 28-30.

⁷² Barbara Johnson, "Teaching Ignorance: L'Ecole des Femmes," in *Yale French Studies* 63 (1982), p. 173.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp.175-76

have the same right to education as men but at the same time ridiculing their aspirations, the playwright is not advancing the feminist cause but instead condemning them for reaching beyond their domestic responsibilities. This begs the questions: can Molière mock feminists with his right hand while championing them with his left?

Johnson is not alone in questioning the playwright's feminist politics. Biographer Virginia Scott calls the play "unusually misogynistic;"⁷⁴ as his penultimate work and his last to deal with the subject of women, Marcel Gutwirth suggests the play serves as a "final revision of Molière's views on the subject of women" after *Les Précieuses ridicules* and *L'École des Femmes*, and attacks it for appearing "to want to draw a line beyond which female attainments and ambitions may not reach;"⁷⁵ Voltaire also criticized Molière for what he saw as ridiculing women with honest efforts to improve their status in society.⁷⁶

Challenging these views is Molière scholar David Shaw, who takes a more progressive view of the playwright's politics, accusing those who see *The Learned Ladies* as anti-feminist as being themselves guilty of anachronism, while arguing against Johnson when he restates "Molière was a fairly radical feminist."⁷⁷ He contends the play was not an attack on feminism but a satire of a specific female type:

Far from expressing contempt for the whole feminist movement, it is intended as a comment on a fairly small group of pretentious but untalented middle-class ladies... this group was a considerable embarrassment to more gifted and intelligent feminists.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Scott, p. 209.

⁷⁵ Gutwirth, p. 355-56

⁷⁶ Quoted in: David Shaw, "Les Femmes Savantes and Feminism," in *Journal of European Studies* xiv (1984), p. 24.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 28

Shaw has many allies, most of whom counter claims of misogyny by maintaining that the status of women in society is not what the play is about: “*Les Femmes savantes* does not speak convincingly or even interestingly of the subject of women in the world, for the simple reason that... it is about opportunism, hypocrisy and fake erudition,”⁷⁹ writes Judith D. Suther, while Larry W. Riggs argues that reading the play in the context of women’s social status is not the most rewarding framework from which to examine the text, as Molière is not mocking women but the intellectual pretensions of the *précieuses*.⁸⁰

But the most convincing argument against those labeling the play anti-feminist is an examination of the play’s male characters. While Molière no doubt pokes fun at the women of *The Learned Ladies*, he is just as harsh – one could say more so – with his men: a collection of pedants, braggarts, wimps, buffoons, and ‘milksoys’. Head of the household Chrysale can’t think for himself, and when he does ‘vent his spleen’ with a chauvinist rant in Act 2, his words are “clearly intended to be laughed at,” as he cannot even summon the courage to address Philaminte directly, choosing instead to hide behind his sister’s affectations and serving as a mask for his lack of courage and integrity.⁸¹ The only instances in which Chrysale seems to be gain any resolve at all is when his fragile ego is either broken or stroked. Ariste much chastise his brother – ‘be a man and make your wife agree’ – in Act 2 before he decides to take action and stop the planned marriage between Henriette and Trissotin, and his young daughter must waste precious

⁷⁹ Judith D. Suther, “The Tricentennial of Molière’s ‘Femmes Savantes,’” in *The French Review. Special Issue*, no. 4 (Spring, 1972), p. 32.

⁸⁰ Riggs, p. 195-198.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

time soothing her father after he infers from her speech that his daughter believes him to be a ‘booby’ and a ‘milk-sop.’

The poet Trissotin, too, is the object of much of the playwright’s scorn. A blowhard, an egoist, and a pedant, the character exhibits no redeeming qualities, growing further ridiculous as the play progresses. Philaminte, whom one could argue is just as pedantic as her idol, has at least through her knowledge gained the ability to take a ‘nobler stance’ when faced with adversity – the temporary loss of the family’s fortune in Act 5. The same cannot be said for the poet, who flees at the first sign of trouble. And truly, not all of the women in *The Learned Ladies* are the objects of ridicule. Family cook Martine, while espousing a more traditional husband/wife dynamic in the play’s final act, shows more fortitude than any of her male counterparts by standing up to Philaminte in the penultimate scene. And Henriette, besides serving as the play’s *raisonneur*, through her refinement, wit, intellect, tact, discernment and independence “comes close to the true feminist ideal of the age,” being intelligent enough to best both Armande and Trissotin in verbal battles.⁸² Even some of those questioning the play’s politics admit his treatment of the female characters is preferable to those of the men. Gutwirth admits that while the women of *The Learned Ladies* are unquestionably grotesque, “it is the men, wavering by turns and unconvincingly assertive (when it is safe to be so), who are comical,” as “the comedy of *Les Femmes savantes* rests not so much on female excess as on male deficiency.”⁸³

The debate about Molière’s feminist politics in *The Learned Ladies* is likely to continue. However, to say he is attacking women is an error, and as Noël Peacock writes,

⁸² Shaw, p. 35-6.

⁸³ Gutwirth, p. 359.

“to dismiss the work as sexist is to ignore the perspective of the play.”⁸⁴ While dated by twenty-first century standards, the views proposed by Molière more than three hundred years ago were undoubtedly progressive for their age, lending credence to Shaw’s claims of anachronism against the play’s critics. Though he praises their aspirations, the playwright does not shy away from satirizing his female subjects, but neither does he treat his men with reverence. Instead, as Shaw rightly points out, “in claiming for women the right to choose their husbands and the duty to avoid pedantry, Molière is identifying himself both with leading feminists and the more sensitive members of the aristocracy.”⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Noël Peacock, *Molière: Les Femmes Savantes* (London: Grant & Cutler, Ltd., 1990), p. 85.

⁸⁵ Shaw, p. 36.

CHAPTER TWO – Analysis and Pre-Production

PART ONE: Directorial Analysis

INITIAL RESPONSE TO THE PLAY

When I first read *The Learned Ladies* I was immediately drawn to the piece's sense of play. Molière has created such well defined characters, it was impossible for me not to be pulled into their world, each of them jumping out at me – from Bélise's misguided self-obsession to Martine's bawdy defending of Chrysale to Trissotin's smug satisfaction. The women are grotesque in their single-minded pursuit of "knowledge" while the men are ineffectual buffoons, stumbling their way through the play. Despite these (deep, deep) flaws, I wanted to spend more time with each of them.

Closely related to this, I think, is the play's theatricality, which is always a major draw for me. The verse makes the play inherently theatrical, adding to the feeling of play while lifting the dialogue off the page. The strict adherence to the iambic pentameter and rhyming couplets create a world that is specifically of the theatre, and while the action is set in a realistic world, the language heightens that world, showing us something we recognize but which still provides distance. However, Wilbur's use of the verse is also subversively modern, as he throws in colloquialisms and anachronisms (such as "booby" and "what's up?"), adding a contemporary edge to the piece. What intrigued me most about this use of language was exploring the boundary between these classic and contemporary worlds: what are the challenges in taking a play that is very much of its time and bringing it alive for a modern audience?

The political aspects of the play were also of great interest to me. While progressive for the seventeenth century, when seen with modern eyes the attitudes Molière expresses towards women and the women's movement could be perceived as horribly sexist (and that's being generous). I feel, however, that the play has much to say about contemporary feminism. It is a mistaken impression of the early twenty-first century, I believe, that over the past fifty years or so men and women have reached a level of equality, and it is my hope that *The Learned Ladies* can help draw attention to these attitudes.

Finally, and what I think surprised me the most when I first read the play, is how sexually charged it is. Audiences (and I include myself here, though I ought to know better) have a perception that the classic plays are "clean." Constrained by the social values of the time, Molière's sexuality is, like Wilbur's verse, subversive, and the play is far from G-rated. It is this "dirtiness" that intrigues me, especially since it is also hidden beneath the "precious" lifestyle the women of *The Learned Ladies* have adopted.

TYPE OR GENRE OF PLAY

Regarding genre, I believe *The Learned Ladies* sits somewhere between a language play and a farce (a “language farce,” perhaps?). It is because of the verse that I think the piece is mistakenly characterized as a language play, and while attention to the cadence, rhythm, and tone of the language cannot be overlooked in rehearsals, it is my belief that more than anything else the play is a physical piece.

Because of this, I don’t want to spend too much time around the table during rehearsals. It is important to get the actors up on their feet as soon as possible, to get them creating, thinking, moving, and inventing. Since the plot, in my estimation, is secondary to the interactions between the play’s characters, giving the actors physical blueprints for their characters is of primary importance. To help with this, I want to start every rehearsal (especially the early ones, when I have the full cast present) with games.

STYLE

The style of the play is one of heightened realism.

The action is grounded in the reality of our world, but the language and the monomania of the characters elevates the style, skewing slightly from the world we live in. Additionally, the space these characters inhabit – the home of Chrysale and Philaminte – is also heightened. Recognizable as a Parisian salon, the home should be decorated with trinkets and books; piled everywhere and covering every conceivable surface and filling every empty nook and cranny. The decoration is practical (especially the books), allowing the characters to climb on, over, and around them. Again, the recognizable space will set the play in reality, but the unusual interaction between the characters and the space will elevate the style.

This style is important to note in rehearsals, as care must be taken to establish and then follow the rules of this heightened universe. We need to ensure that we use the tools we have been given – the language, the characters, the set – to their full theatrical potential, but at the same time be wary that the production doesn’t veer too far into a cartoonish mode. Similarly, if the play stays too close to realism, it could come off as melodramatic (or: boring).

SPACE

The Learned Ladies will be presented at the Frederic Wood Theatre, a proscenium theatre with a capacity (I believe) somewhere in the 350-400 range.

While perfectly appropriate for the style of the production, there are a number of challenges to be taken into consideration with the space. First, sightlines can be a major issue, as the house is wider than the proscenium, which has the potential to cut off sightlines to audience members sitting extreme house right or left. Care must be taken when blocking entrances from upstage right or left, as well as when blocking

any business that may take place in those areas. Fortunately, there is plenty of rehearsal time in the space to help solve those problems.

The space will also be the biggest in which I have directed a show, and that includes both size of the audience as well as stage space. We are using a great deal of the stage's depth as well as a good deal of its width (the entirety of it, I think), so it will be challenging for me to think and work on a larger scale. I have grown accustomed to a great deal of actor/audience intimacy in the spaces I usually work in, and while that is something that will likely have to be somewhat sacrificed (due not only to the nature of the space but also the presentational nature of the show), I hope to find a means by which to create some intimacy between the performers and the spectators.

Finally, since the house is so large, I will have to adjust my directing style. Generally, I move a great deal during rehearsals – pacing back and forth, sitting at the table and moving to the stage for notes – but because of the size of the Freddie Wood, too much of this could tire me out (there are a lot of stairs in there) as well as waste time if I have to shuffle from the back of the house to the stage and back again. I have to be aware of my habits and adjust accordingly.

AUDIENCE

Like most Theatre at UBC shows, the audience for *The Learned Ladies* will consist mainly of students, friends/family of the cast and crew, as well as Theatre at UBC subscribers (although I have no idea how big this last group is, or what their demographic would be. I assume it's a combination of students and older patrons, but that's just a guess based on attendance I've observed at other UBC shows).

It can safely be thought, however, that the audience for the production would be a younger one, but this raises some interesting questions. Will the fact that *The Learned Ladies* is a "classic" play stigmatize it in the eyes of a younger group? What expectations will they enter the theatre with? While I am hoping the play has a contemporary feel and tone, how hard and how early will this have to be set? To this end, I am hoping to use the pre-set and first few moments of the play to firmly establish the world of the play. I am hoping to use more contemporary music as the audience files in, as well as project "opening credits" on the video screen that will be placed upstage, above the fireplace. It is my hope that these elements will clearly establish that we are not in a museum piece (I am also hoping to choreograph a short dumb show for the play's opening moments, which would be kicked off by Martine's use of the word "fuck" – the first word we would hear. However, the idea isn't quite formed enough in my head as of yet). Conversely, I wonder if older audience members would be expecting a "clean" and "traditional" production of the play, and what affect these decisions could have on their expectations.

GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES OF PRODUCTION

REHEARSALS

- We have lots of time to rehearse (about 200 hours before tech weekend/week); although the rehearsals will be broken up into two chunks of 100 hours each, separated by 18 days off.
- I'm not sure how these two and a half weeks off will affect the process, but it will affect how I structure the two weeks of rehearsal before the break, as I will attempt (at the very least) to have the entire play blocked, giving the actors a strong physical imprint of the play so they have something to come back to when we reconvene in January.
- We have to move rehearsal spaces, which is not great, especially since we'll be in space A, then space B, before returning to space A, and then eventually returning to space B. I don't know how this is going to affect rehearsals, especially since we'll be moving to a smaller space. It is my hope that in the week we're in the smaller space I can do more intimate work with the actors.
- I just found out (although unofficially) that we'll be rehearsing in Frederic Wood Theatre for the first two weeks, and I'm of mixed feelings about this. Part of me thinks it's great news, since we can get completely accurate dimensions right off the top for our first blocking pass through; but, the other part of me is weary, since I like the feel of rehearsal rooms and don't like moving to the theatre too early as I feel actors get the sense they need to perform. Will the actors allow themselves to play in that space, or will it give them the impression that they need to "solve" everything right away?
- On the first day back after the holiday break some of the cast and crew (myself included) will have been back in Vancouver for less than twenty-four hours. I will need to make sure I plan that rehearsal carefully (i.e. ease back into things slowly, by not doing too much).

CAST

- My cast is all BFA students, mostly in their final year (8 of 11), and whom I trust completely. Admittedly, I am a little wary of the 3 intermediate year students, but not overly so. I have less experience working with them, so I feel like I don't have as much of a handle on how they work as I do for the students in final year.
- I am worried about how the cast will "play" together and with me. Will they play the games I want to play? Will they create for me? I have worked with all of the students before (in class at the very least, though some less than others), and have closely worked with 5 of the 11 cast members, directing them either in scene work or in the 520 plays last year.
- There is doubling in the casting, which wasn't my ideal scenario as it makes the world of the play smaller. Regardless, I will need to ensure enough time is spent with those two actors ensuring they are comfortable in both roles.

CREW

- Regarding stage management – I have worked with my two ASMs (on *Death & Taxes*), and have a good relationship with both of them. I have yet to work with

- my SM in a stage management situation, although she did act as sound operator on *The Maids* last year, and, if I recall, was awesome.
- I am very confident in my set designer, and the conversations we have had to this point have been constructive. We should have much of the set pieces for the first day of rehearsal, and those we don't have we will definitely have stand-ins for.
 - I am also confident in my costume designer, although since she has been busy that process isn't as far along as the set. I had hoped to see more drawings by this point, but I am told that they are coming soon (i.e. this week).
 - I have worked with my LX designer before (she designed set for *Death & Taxes*), but not as a light designer; I don't know my sound designer, but since Patrick Pennefather is mentoring him, I am not concerned with that aspect of the design. He has yet to contact me, however, and my attempts to get his coordinates haven't worked out.

PERIOD

The Learned Ladies is set at the same time it was written: late seventeenth century France (1672, to be precise). The play is very indicative of its period, as it reinforces the social and familial roles of the time, and class distinctions play a major role in the action (through the arranged marriage of Henriette to Trissotin). However, the playwright works to subvert those roles, most notably through Chrysale, the ineffectual patriarch.

We will be heavily influenced by the period in the production, but we will not strictly adhere to it. In a sense, the setting will be “mash-up”: seventeenth century shapes and silhouettes (for costumes and set) with modern colours and fabrics (again, for costumes as well as the set and furniture). The hope is that through the mixing of the contemporary and the classic we can create a world that sits, for lack of a better term, outside of time, with no specific period attached. To help communicate the story, I want to draw attention to the sensibilities of the time (the play, with the previously mentioned strict class structure and social roles, wouldn't work if set today), but I don't want to be bound by the rigid rules of a “period.” Additionally, setting the production in this manner allows us to move closer to the heightened realism that I am aiming for, as the world will be unlike our own (past and present), helping the actors achieve the heightened style. I also think this setting will allow the audience greater access to the piece, as I hope to create a world they want to engage with and discover, instead of merely observe.

EMPHATIC ELEMENT

The most important element in the production should be character. Each has a strong, single, unchanging desire that they push hard to achieve through the course of the entire play (they are Molière's “monomaniacs”). The fun, I believe, for both audiences and actors, is to place these characters in a room together and allow them to bounce off each other. The plot is secondary – does anyone believe that the result is ever really in doubt? – what I really want to focus on is how these characters interact

with each other. What tactics do they use in order to get what they want? It will be important to make sure that actor objectives are very clear in order to get the most from these interactions.

THEME OR IDEA OF THE PLAY

The Learned Ladies is a play about a group of well meaning but misguided women who are taken advantage of by a money-hungry fraud looking to cash in on their naïveté.

ACTION OF THE PLAY

The major events of *The Learned Ladies* play out in the following manner:

STASIS

At the beginning of the play Philaminte, her daughter Armande, and her sister-in-law Bélise run a salon in their home with dreams of opening an academy that would be the most influential in all of France. They have converted their servants (save one) to their learned ways. Philaminte's husband, Chrysale, is frustrated by their actions but because he fears his wife's temper he tolerates them, even though he cannot stand Trissotin, the pedantic poet who frequents their meetings. Meanwhile, Henriette (second daughter to Philaminte and Chrysale) is being courted by Clitandre, whose romantic advances were previously spurned by the jealous Armande.

INTRUSION

The inciting incident of *The Learned Ladies* occurs when Chrysale gives permission for Clitandre and Henriette to marry, without first consulting his wife.

MAJOR CRISIS

The plot's major crisis occurs when Philaminte announces that Henriette is to marry Trissotin.

CLIMAX

The climax of the play occurs when Ariste, in possession of letters from the attorneys of both Philaminte and Chrysale, arrives at the wedding of Henriette and Trissotin.

NEW STASIS

At the end of the play, the new stasis sees Trissotin exposed as a gold-digger and ejected from the salon, Clitandre and Henriette married, and Martine rehired.

What is notable about the play is that there isn't a great deal of change at the end. While Trissotin has been exposed, it is not as a fraudulent poet or a pedant, but as a gold-digger, and none of the women choose to abandon their *précieus* lifestyle. While Armande makes an attempt to reconcile with Clitandre, that gambit's failure does not cause any change, and she returns to her mother and aunt. Chrysale still

disapproves, but is temporarily satiated by his “victory” over his wife. One is left with the impression that this new stasis is not meant to last.

DRAMATIC METAPHOR

The Learned Ladies is like a playground, where the boys and girls are fighting for supremacy.

MOOD

I want the mood of the play to be light and comic, full of energy and surprise. At its heart, *The Learned Ladies* is closer to farce than a language play, and the mood should reflect that. I would like to establish a light, almost comedy of manners mood at the top, and slowly crank up the energy as the characters are introduced and complications are thrown into the lovers’ plot. While the piece will never achieve the breathless pacing of a true farce, it should be infused with that same energy.

CHARACTERS

1. CHRYSALE

<i>Qualities</i>	Honest, generous, caring, good natured, timid, concessive, pleasing, wishy-washy, frustrated, scared, submissive
<i>Metaphor</i>	Like a tired child.
<i>Rhythmic/Musical Quality</i>	Unaccustomed weight; a timid baritone.
<i>Major Desire</i>	Peace in his household.
<i>Main Action</i>	Accepting, and then fighting for the marriage between Henriette and Clitandre.

2. PHILAMINTE

<i>Qualities</i>	Intelligent, condescending, rigid, stubborn, domineering, impatient, stoic, logical
<i>Metaphor</i>	Like a force of nature.
<i>Rhythmic/Musical Quality</i>	Short and sharp; strings.
<i>Major Desire</i>	To gain influence among the Parisian literary and intellectual

elite.

Main Action Arranging the marriage of Henriette and Trissotin.

3. ARMANDE

Qualities Petulant, regretful, spiteful, deceitful, lost, confused

Metaphor Like a child unhappy with the dessert they've chosen.

Rhythmic/Musical Quality Unsure/untrained; stops and starts

Major Desire To see Henriette marry Trissotin, leaving Clitandre for herself.

Main Action Interfering in the marriage plans of Henriette and Clitandre.

4. HENRIETTE

Qualities Intelligent, independent, polite, stubborn, modern, mischievous, honest, kind, pragmatic

Metaphor Like a rope in a game of tug of war.

Rhythmic/Musical Quality Light and breezy; a well played flute

Major Desire To marry Clitandre.

Main Action Marrying Clitandre.

5. ARISTE

Qualities Crafty, provocative, generous, unrelenting

Metaphor Like a fly you can't swat.

Rhythmic/Musical Quality A low tone; a steady beat always under the surface

Major Desire To see Chrysale retake charge of the household.

Main Action Returning with the forged letters, designed to expose

Trissotin.

6. BÉLISE

<i>Qualities</i>	Fantasy prone, follower, floater, maternal
<i>Metaphor</i>	Like a non-sequitor.
<i>Rhythmic/Musical Quality</i>	Breezy; cacophonous
<i>Major Desire</i>	To convert all in the home to the learned ways of Philaminte, Armande, and herself.
<i>Main Action</i>	Interfering in the marriage plans of Clitandre and Henriette.

7. CLITANDRE

<i>Qualities</i>	Intelligent, quick witted, spiteful, secure, level headed, confident
<i>Metaphor</i>	Like a racehorse with the finish line in sight: focused on a singular goal.
<i>Rhythmic/Musical Quality</i>	Calm and steady; a sonata
<i>Major Desire</i>	To marry Henriette.
<i>Main Action</i>	Marrying Henriette.

8. TRISSOTIN

<i>Qualities</i>	Pompous, self-aggrandizing, vain, self-absorbed, insecure, arrogant, narcissistic
<i>Metaphor</i>	Like a leech you haven't noticed, and by the time you do, it's very hard to shake off.
<i>Rhythmic/Musical Quality</i>	Pomp and circumstance; horns; he hums his own theme song as he enters a room
<i>Major Desire</i>	To gain access to the family's fortune through marriage to

Henriette.

Main Action Attempting to marry Henriette.

9. VADIUS

Qualities Jealous, bitter, self-absorbed, two-faced

Metaphor Like a child who wants to be allowed in the treehouse.

Rhythmic/Musical Quality High toned; whiny; out of tune

Major Desire To gain entrance into Philaminte's salon.

Main Action Sending a letter to Philaminte exposing Trissotin.

10. MARTINE

Qualities Matter of fact, blunt, no self-censorship, gossipy

Metaphor Like a yappy puppy.

Rhythmic/Musical Quality Fast paced and frantic; horns and strings (ska)

Major Desire To be able to do her job without interference from the learned ladies.

Main Action Returning to the house and defending Chrysale.

11. LÉPINE

Qualities Clumsy, stoic, lazy

Metaphor Like a lazy cat.

Rhythmic/Musical Quality Slow and steady; a neglected and out of tune piano

Major Desire To have an easy time of things.

Main Action Neglecting to answer the door when Julien arrives.

12. JULIEN

Qualities Feisty, overworked, irritable, excitable

Metaphor Like a precocious eight year old.

*Rhythmic/Musical
Quality* Energetic; snappy

Major Desire To be left alone.

Main Action Delivering Vadius' letter to Philaminte.

13. NOTARY

Qualities By the book, calm, professional

Metaphor Like an elite athlete – cool under pressure.

*Rhythmic/Musical
Quality* Fits and starts

Major Desire To follow the proper procedures.

Main Action Writing up the marriage contract.

STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS

The Learned Ladies is divided into five acts, and those acts are divided into French scenes, with each act containing anywhere from four to nine scenes. The structure of the play – the Act 3 introduction of Trissotin and Philaminte's subsequent announcement of his marriage to Henriette – calls for the intermission to be placed between the third and fourth acts which, unfortunately, will cause the play to have a long first half (I flirted with placing the intermission after Act 2, but there isn't enough dramatic tension at that point; and I don't feel foregoing an intermission a viable option because of the play's length).

The play's first act deals with most of the play's exposition (the salon, Chrysale's lack of authority, Clitandre and Henriette's relationship) and introduces us to the Clitandre/Henriette/Armande love triangle as well as Bélise (and introduces the Clitandre/Henriette/Bélise love triangle, as much as it exists).

Act 2 first introduces us to Chrysale, when he agrees to the Clitandre/Henriette match, and then to Philaminte, who is first seen firing Martine, the maid, over her improper grammar. At this point all the major players (save Trissotin) have been on stage, and the complication of the plot (who will Henriette marry?) has been hinted at.

The middle act showcases Trissotin (and is perhaps the most comic, with the character's bad poetry being the focus), who has arrived for a poetry reading, and also brings the plot's major crisis: the announcement by Philaminte that Trissotin will marry Henriette.

In Act 4 plans to disobey Philaminte are concocted and there is a confrontation between Clitandre and Philaminte after Clitandre overhears Armande badmouthing him to her mother; but the major event is the arrival of Vadius' letter, exposing Trissotin as a gold-digger and accusing him of plagiarizing his poetry. This accusation stirs Philaminte to push the date of the marriage up – to that evening – as well as convince Armande that she should aid her sister and Clitandre in finding a way around her mother's wishes.

The play's final act brings a very frank speech from Henriette to Trissotin about what their married life would be like (she will cuckold him), as well as the arrival of the notary and a battle at the play's climax as for the first time all the major players are sharing the stage. The play's true climax arrives in the form of Ariste, who enters with forged letters designed to expose Trissotin. They work, and the poet flees, after which Clitandre and Henriette are married (after another tense moment in which it is revealed the letters are fake). The play has almost no denouement, with Chrysale ordering the Notary to draw up the marriage contract "just as I told you to" as the play's final line.

With regards to rehearsals, I will stick to the French scenes indicated in the text as rehearsal units. Most of the scenes are of a fairly manageable size, and the larger ones (in Act 3) can be divided into halves quite easily.

The play contains two longer monologues (which I may cut or trim down, as their focus is a personal attack by Molière on his perceived enemies) as well as a few sections of stichomythia. Not until the play's final scenes do we see the majority of the characters on stage. Previous to that, the scenes generally hold two to four characters, on average, with another exception being Act 3, where all four women, as well as Trissotin and Vadius, are on stage during the salon scenes (there is also one scene where a character is alone on stage, Act 2, Scene 1, but the scene is only four lines long).

DIRECTORIAL APPROACH

The approach I will be taking with the play will be one based on character. As previously stated, the most interesting aspects of this play for me are the interactions

between the characters. The characters drive the play's action through their stubborn and unyielding pursuit of their singular goals and it is because of this that I want to focus my energy on clear character work, helping the actors to find concrete objectives and make strong choices – be they physical or intellectual.

Additionally, I would like the actors to feel free to play – and to create an environment where they aren't afraid to make big, bold choices. To accomplish this I'm going to take a page from David Ball and "say yes to everything" (or at least, I'm going to try my best to say yes to everything). The tone and energy that play will bring to the production is extremely important to me, and I want to do my best to encourage the actors to keep playing as long as possible (the games I have planned should also help with this).

DESIGN WORDS/VISUAL APPROACH

When speaking with my designers, the element that I stressed (and will stress, for those I haven't met with yet) most is that I want to create a universe where the actors and characters can play. This is a bit of a vague statement, I admit, but I believe it puts the designers in the right frame of mind. Namely, that the world of the play is exuberant filled with constant curiosity and rapid discovery. I want a world where surprises hide around corners and the energy is unlimited.

In terms of set, there is a need to establish the social status of the family. They have money, and their home should reflect that. However, their intellectual aspirations are just pretensions, so a "keeping up with the Jones'" syndrome is also appropriate. It is a space designed by the women, so the choice of colours and furniture should reflect that – feminine shapes and colours (and in keeping with the period "mash up" discussed above). It is a light space that the learned ladies have tried to endow with an intellectual weight. But in doing so it has become cluttered, giving actors and characters unlimited obstacles with which they could interact.

With costumes, I followed a similar approach. Again, these are characters that have money, and their clothing should reflect that. The women, especially, would want to be wearing the latest fashions, and the more pretentious of the men (Trissotin and Vadius) would as well. Like the set, I want to keep the shapes of the period, but move toward a more modern look when it comes to the colours and fabric of the costumes. Like the set, how can the characters "play" with the costumes? How do they become obstacles for themselves and each other?

The lighting of the show should also be light and playful. There is the practical consideration of gauging the passage of time, but I feel that perhaps a more theatrical approach can be taken towards the show's lights (footlights!). This, I believe, will be the design element that evolves the most throughout the process. As the world of the play becomes better defined in the rehearsal room, how exactly the lighting can best be utilized will become more clear.

Sound will likely be the most problematic of the design elements, as, like with the set and costumes, the music should fill the gap between the play's classic and modern elements. The music will be used primarily between Molière's designated acts (I don't see the need for underscore, and there likely aren't any effects to be used either), and should be light and playful, keeping the action moving over scene changes that will likely be in full view of the audience.

AUDIENCE ORIENTATION

We will be using the apron on the Frederic Wood stage, in order to gain a degree of intimacy for the asides. This will also allow the action to be moved further downstage, aiding with the aforementioned sightline issues for upstage entrances, and adding a little bit of intimacy to the entire production.

THE WORLD OF THE PLAY

As was mentioned briefly in the "design" section, I want to create a world where the characters play, a world filled with boundless energy and unending surprise. It is a world of classic icons and images invaded by contemporary trappings that may at first seem out of place at first, but their presence quickly becomes natural. The world of *The Learned Ladies* is a world of characters with single unrelenting goals and desires, who will do anything to satisfy their obsessive monomania.

SPECIAL PROBLEMS

There are two special problems that I can foresee. The first is the play's ending. After Ariste reveals that the letters were forgeries designed to chase Trissotin away, the play just stops. There is no denouement to speak of, and the production needs, in my mind, a "pop" or "flourish" at the end to really place a button on the action. I am not sure how this can be achieved just yet (maybe through a full-company dance number?), but it is one of my biggest concerns, to date.

Also troubling is the amount of time that passes from the beginning of the play through to the end. Molière seems to have followed the unity of time (although there is no indication in the text to support this, the feeling I have when reading is that these events take place within a twenty-four period), and Acts 4 and 5 definitely occur on the same day, but I am still mulling over how much time should pass between acts. Also, I am still considering when to start the play. Does Act 1 take place in the morning? Evening?

PART TWO: Given Circumstances Analysis

I. Given Circumstances

A. Environmental Facts

- Geography: France. Paris. The action takes place at the house of Chrysale (“a well to do bourgeois”), in a room in which has been converted into a salon by his wife, Philaminte, their daughter Armande, and his sister, Bélise. The salon is at the center of the home, and must be passed through to get to the kitchen, bedrooms, etc.
- Date: unspecified in the text, but one can infer through the text and action that the play takes during the “present” in which it was written, that being the late seventeenth century (1672, to be precise). It is also unspecified over how long a period the play takes place (do they occur during a single day, beginning in the morning and finishing in the evening, or over one or two days?), but clues in the text (as well as the author’s tendency in previous works to follow the unity of time) lead one to believe the events occur in one day.
- Economic Environment: The family is “bourgeois” (as indicated by the playwright in his description of Chrysale), and employs multiple servants (two of whom we see, and six others who are only mentioned). Further, the women are able to afford a great number of books, which were expensive acquisitions at the time. Also, there are a great number of references to the family’s financial status, such as Trissotin’s dowry hunting, and the large-sum lawsuits involving Chrysale and Philaminte.
- Political Environment: Louis XIV is king of France (and his reign would be one of political stability in the country), and there is a rigid class structure in place. As members of the bourgeoisie, the family wouldn’t have the power of the aristocracy, but were members of a large (and growing) economic and political class who held some sway over the kingdom.
- Social Environment: France is still a patriarchal society, where feminism is just beginning to emerge. The salons of the period encouraged women to become more educated and independent, and it is this movement that Philaminte, Armande, and Bélise are trying to imitate. However, members of the intellectual elite mock this faux *précieux* lifestyle, which would explain while the women are only able to attract second (or third) rate poet Trissotin to their gatherings. It is also an environment where children were beholden to their parents’ will. Arranged marriages based on economic and social benefits were common.
- Religious Environment: The state religion at the time was Roman Catholicism, and while one could assume Chrysale et al are Catholic, no affiliations are mentioned in the text.

B. Previous Action

- Philaminte, Armande, and Bélise have been running a salon in their home, which has attracted the attention of Trissotin, a poet who has begun frequenting their meetings and reading his poetry.
- The push for knowledge has affected the entire household, with Philaminte ordering that all the servants obey the rules of speech and grammar, the learning of which (some 30 lessons; taught by Philaminte, Armande, and Bélise) she has deemed more important than the household chores.
- The state of his household is causing great concern for Chrysale, who believes his home has devolved into chaos, as the servants (as well as his wife) are more concerned with learning than they are with ensuring his house is being run efficiently.
- Armande and Clitandre have ended their courtship after Armande rejected her suitor's marriage proposal.
- After being rebuffed by Armande, Clitandre sought consolation in the arms of Henriette, and the two have subsequently fallen in love.
- Clitandre has decided to ask for Henriette's hand in marriage, and is looking for allies.
- Philaminte is also involved in a lawsuit worth some 40,000 crowns. She is expected to win the case.

C. Polar Attitudes of Principal Characters, both in the Beginning and at the Ending:

The principal characters in *The Learned Ladies* are monomaniacs: they hold one strong desire throughout the play, and even in defeat, don't (often) change their views.

1. CHRYSALE

- At the top, he hopes for order to be restored to his household, for his family and servants to give up what he considers "ridiculous" learning. When he hears of the potential marriage of Henriette to Clitandre, he believes it could help achieve this.
- By the end of the play he is happy with her daughter's new husband, and hopes the removal of Trissotin will help reestablish order.

2. PHILAMINTE

- When the play opens Philaminte wants to continue converting those in the home (and those outside, through her academy) who are not yet convinced to follow her learned ways. The marriage of Henriette to Trissotin will help achieve this.
- At the end of the play she has seen Trissotin exposed as a money hungry fraud, but has not wavered from her beliefs regarding learning.

3. ARMANDE

- At first, Armande is repulsed by the idea of marriage and ridicules her sister for being interested in such a “vulgar” concept, trying to convert Henriette to her the educational ways of herself, their mother, and their aunt Bélise.
- At play’s end she is dismayed at Henriette’s marriage to Clitandre, as she was hoping the marriage of her sister to Trissotin would leave Clitandre for her.

4. HENRIETTE

- When the play begins, Henriette rejects the learning proffered by her mother, and hopes to marry Clitandre.
- At the end, she still rejects the intellectual pretensions of the other women, and is happy to be marrying Clitandre.

5. ARISTE

- At the beginning of the play, Ariste hopes to aid in the marriage plans of Clitandre and Henriette.
- He also hopes to help his brother gain control of the household back from Philaminte.
- At the end of the play his views haven’t changed.

6. BÉLISE

- At the top, Bélise believes in the learning championed by Philaminte, and wants to help her sister-in-law convert all those in the home.
- She also believes that all men are secretly in love with her, despite their protests to the contrary.
- At the end of the play, her views haven’t changed.

7. CLITANDRE

- When the play begins, Clitandre wants to marry Henriette, and wishes to expose Trissotin for the fraud he believes him to be.
- When the play finishes, he is content in his marriage to Henriette and his triumph over Trissotin.

8. TRISSOTIN

- When the play begins, Trissotin hopes to gain access to the family’s wealth through marriage to Henriette.
- At the end of the play, he has been exposed as a fraud and humiliated.

9. MARTINE

- At the top of the play, Martine rejects the learning and pretensions of the Learned Ladies.
- Despite being fired, her attitude does not change at the end of the play.

The characters not included here (those I don't consider "principals") are Vadius, Lépine, Julien, and the Notary.

II. Language & Dialogue

A. Choice of Words

- Wilbur's words are chosen carefully, with very few repeated, unless he is trying to draw attention to the parallels. Instead, synonyms and metaphor are used throughout the dialogue.
- The exception to this may be the word "sense," which is used by the learned ladies as a "proper" term in substitute of sex. It is not the only word they use in place, but it is the most frequent.
- "Pedant" and "pedantry" are also exceptions, which are used often by Clitandre and sometimes by Chrysale and Ariste.
- There are a few colloquialisms and anachronisms spread through the text, most of which belong to Chrysale. He asks, for example, "what's up?" and wonders if others think him a "booby".
- Names of (in Molière's time) contemporary writers and scholars – such as Malherbe, Balzac, and Vaugelas – are dropped throughout the text.
- Bélise and Armande share similar language. Is this a foreshadowing of how Armande will end up?

B. Choice of Images

- The text doesn't contain many recurring images, but some characters have their own repeated imagery.
- Chrysale uses food images and allusions quite often, and Philaminte uses animal images when referring to those she believes to be uneducated.
- There is a good deal of sexual images, but as mentioned above, they are usually disguised under metaphor and other substitutes.
- The images pedants and pedantry are an exception, brought up again and again.
- Related to pedants is the image of Trissotin – in the original production Molière dressed the character in the old clothes of the Abbé Cotin, who the character was based on and whom Molière was satirizing. Vadius, as well, was intended to be a familiar character to Molière's audience.

C. Choice of Peculiar Characteristics (ie. dialect)

- Philaminte, Armande, and Bélise speak in a formal tone, following the rules of grammar. Although, Bélise does often make mistakes.
- Martine speaks in a very informal manner, disregarding all rules of speech and grammar.
- Trissotin speaks in a very elevated and overly poetic tone

D. The Sound of the Dialogue

- Written entirely in iambic pentameter with rhyming couplets (with no exceptions, save the three letters read), the dialogue flows in a natural rhythm.
- The presence of the couplets isn't always apparent, however, as Wilbur has structured the speeches so as to avoid a repetitive AA BB CC rhyming pattern.

E. Structure of Lines and Speeches

- As mentioned, Wilbur has translated Molière's alexandrine verse into iambic pentameter, which is followed rigidly, as are the rhyming couplets.
- The couplets, however, are not always contained to a single character. Often one character will deliver the first part of the rhyme, with another character picking up the second part. I am curious as to what this could indicate (if anything). Is it an unfinished thought? One character jumping in on another's speech?
- There are also quite a few sections of half and unfinished lines in the play, used mostly when characters are arguing (Philaminte with Chrysale and Martine), but also to indicate urgency (Chrysale and Ariste).
- Stichomythia is also used in small sections throughout the text.

III. Characters

CHRYSALE

<i>Desire</i>	To restore peace (and sanity, in his opinion) to his household. Also: to reclaim the position of "head" of the home; to see Henriette and Clitandre married
<i>Will</i>	Wavering. Chrysale talks a big game in front of his brother, children, and servants, but when it comes time to confront Philaminte with his desire, he cedes to her will or talks in circles.
<i>Moral Stance</i>	Honest and forthright – he speaks what is on his mind, even if it leads him to trouble.
<i>Decorum</i>	Chrysale is prone to somewhat petulant outbursts when things don't go his way. He treats his servants well, and respects the wishes of his children (when they align with his own). He mocks those he sees as "pedants" (most notably Trissotin). He is easily swayed by the arguments of others (most notably Ariste and Philaminte) either through shame, humiliation, or fear.

Adjectives Honest, generous, caring, good natured, timid, concessive, pleasing, wishy-washy, frustrated, scared, submissive

Character Heartbeat: heavy
mood-intensity Perspiration: always
 Stomach Condition: tightly knotted
 Muscle Tension: in his back
 Breathing: normal

PHILAMINTE

Desire To be the most learned and progressive woman in Paris, and for those around her to follow in her example. Philaminte would like to gain influence in the Parisian salon scene. She also wants Trissotin to marry Henriette, as she believes this will help cement her status among the intellectuals.

Will Strong and stubborn. Philaminte believes absolutely in her cause, and it seems that nothing can change her mind.

Moral Stance Conservative.

Decorum She is impatient with those who don't agree with her, and is somewhat of a bully towards her husband. With her children, she has little respect for their desires, as she pushes forward with the arranged marriage despite Henriette's protest. Philaminte fires Martine, the maid, because she doesn't follow the proper rules of speech, regardless of the fact she is a good cook and housekeeper. She admits her mistake (and takes pleasure from the situation) when Trissotin is outed as a fraud.

Adjectives Intelligent, condescending, rigid, stubborn, domineering, impatient, stoic, logical

Character Heartbeat: elevated
mood-intensity Perspiration: never
 Stomach Condition: normal
 Muscle Tension: all over
 Breathing: short breaths

ARMANDE

<i>Desire</i>	To convert her sister to the learned ways of the other women, and convince her not to marry Clitandre. Also: even though she has previously rebuffed him, Armande also wishes to marry Clitandre.	
<i>Will</i>	Constantly wavering. She mocks Henriette for wanting to marry Clitandre instead of – like her mother, aunt, and self – pursuing the more “refined” pleasures of knowledge, but also wants to marry him. She takes a hard stance against the marriage, but does agree (after Trissotin is exposed by Julien) to help her sister.	
<i>Moral Stance</i>	Also wavers. Armande lies to her mother about Clitandre, but does agree to help the couple when the truth about Trissotin is revealed.	
<i>Decorum</i>	Armande both helps and hinders the marriage, which mirrors her conflicted feelings toward Clitandre. She lies to her mother but also agrees to help Henriette. When left alone at the end of the play, she pouts, having lost her chance at marriage.	
<i>Adjectives</i>	Petulant, regretful, spiteful, deceitful, lost, confused	
<i>Character mood-intensity</i>	Heartbeat:	normal
	Perspiration:	normal
	Stomach Condition:	topsy-turvy
	Muscle Tension:	in her face and neck
	Breathing:	short breaths

HENRIETTE

<i>Desire</i>	To marry Clitandre.	
<i>Will</i>	Strong. Like her mother, Henriette cannot be shaken from her desire by anyone. However, when she is led to believe the family fortune has been lost, she rejects Clitandre in order to save him from a life of poverty.	
<i>Moral Stance</i>	Moderate. Henriette wants to obey her parents, but is willing to run away should she not get her way. She is honest with Trissotin about what their potential marriage would be like (she would cheat on him).	
<i>Decorum</i>	She is polite when in the mixed company of the salon, but when alone	

with Trissotin she tells him if their marriage happens she will cuckold him. Henriette plays her parents against one another, going to her father when she knows what her mother's reaction will be. In many ways, her behaviour mirrors that of Philaminte.

Adjectives Intelligent, independent, polite, stubborn, modern, mischievous, honest, kind, pragmatic

Character mood-intensity

Heartbeat:	normal
Perspiration:	light
Stomach Condition:	none
Muscle Tension:	none
Breathing:	normal

ARISTE

Desire To see Clitandre and Henriette married, as well as to see his brother reclaim control of the household.

Will Strong. Ariste repeatedly berates Chrysale for being “womanish” and goes to great lengths (deception) to see the young couple married.

Moral Stance Ends justify the means – Ariste will do what he believes is necessary to get what he wants (which is to see those close to him happy).

Decorum Ariste continuously teases his brother for being subordinate to his wife, which fuels the confrontations between the couple. He also acts as intermediary between Clitandre and the family, in order to help facilitate his marriage with Henriette. He arrives at the play's end with forged letters created to expose Trissotin gold digging motives.

Adjectives Crafty, provocative, generous, unrelenting

Character mood-intensity

Heartbeat:	normal
Perspiration:	normal
Stomach Condition:	normal
Muscle Tension:	loose
Breathing:	normal

BÉLISE

Desire Like her sister-in-law, Bélise wishes to convert the household to her learned ways.

<i>Will</i>	Strong. Bélise cannot be convinced – despite the vigour of those who argue with her – to change her mind, whether the subject is the proper rules of speech or the romantic interest men may (or may not) have in her. However, it is unclear how much influence Philaminte has on her.
<i>Moral Stance</i>	High morals. Mistaken or not, Bélise will not allow her “suitors” to speak to her improperly.
<i>Decorum</i>	Her actions follow very closely those of Philaminte, whom she emulates. When alone with men she believes are in love with her, Bélise is polite but keeps her distance, playing coy so as not to seem improper.
<i>Adjectives</i>	Fantasy prone, follower, floater, maternal
<i>Character mood-intensity</i>	Heartbeat: slow Perspiration: powdered Stomach Condition: tranquil Muscle Tension: very loose Breathing: slow and steady

CLITANDRE

<i>Desire</i>	Clitandre desires to marry Henriette.
<i>Will</i>	Strong. Despite protests from Philaminte, as well as the threat of Trissotin, he refuses to back down in his desire to marry Henriette.
<i>Moral Stance</i>	Questionable. Clitandre ran to Henriette when rejected by Armande, and speaks poorly of many people.
<i>Decorum</i>	He’s a bit of a dick, goading Trissotin and teasing Philaminte and Armande, seemingly for the fun of it all. However, he treats Henriette with love and respect, and is also respectful of Chrysale.
<i>Adjectives</i>	Intelligent, quick witted, spiteful, secure, level headed, confident
<i>Character mood-intensity</i>	Heartbeat: steady Perspiration: light Stomach Condition: normal Muscle Tension: when confronted by Trissotin Breathing: normal

TRISSOTIN

<i>Desire</i>	To gain access to the family's fortune by marrying Henriette	
<i>Will</i>	Very strong. Despite the strong objections of Henriette (and also Clitandre), he remains strong in his desire to marry her.	
<i>Moral Stance</i>	Weak. He copies poems from others and lies to Philaminte about his love for Henriette.	
<i>Decorum</i>	Gets into a lengthy praise session with Vadius, but grows sour and spiteful when his poem is unknowingly trashed. When he learns there is no dowry for marrying Henriette he quickly finds an excuse to leave.	
<i>Adjectives</i>	Pompous, self-aggrandizing, vain, self-absorbed, insecure, arrogant, narcissistic	
<i>Character mood-intensity</i>	Heartbeat:	steady
	Perspiration:	hidden under clothes and perfumes
	Stomach Condition:	heavy
	Muscle Tension:	tightly wound – like a coil or spring
	Breathing:	deep

VADIUS

<i>Desire</i>	To gain entrance into Philaminte salon.	
<i>Will</i>	Strong. After inadvertently criticizing Trissotin, he backpedals furiously in the hopes of correcting his mistake.	
<i>Moral Stance</i>	Conniving. Speaking behind Trissotin's back (twice) shows he can't be trusted.	
<i>Decorum</i>	Gets into a lengthy debate with Trissotin over who is the better poet – with each one praising the other effusively – and then unknowingly slams him when asked for an opinion about another poem. After the tete a tete, he sends a letter to Philaminte accusing Trissotin of chasing the family's money.	
<i>Adjectives</i>	Jealous, bitter, self-absorbed, two-faced	
<i>Character</i>	Heartbeat:	fast

<i>mood-intensity</i>	Perspiration:	above average
	Stomach Condition:	empty
	Muscle Tension:	highly strung
	Breathing:	normal

MARTINE

<i>Desire</i>	To be able to do her job without the interference of the learned ladies.	
<i>Will</i>	Determined. Martine will plead her case (and Chrysale's) to the bitter end.	
<i>Moral Stance</i>	Conventional. She believes in traditional societal roles.	
<i>Decorum</i>	Martine talks back to Philaminte, when standing up for Chrysale.	
<i>Adjectives</i>	Matter of fact, blunt, no self-censorship, gossipy	
<i>Character mood-intensity</i>	Heartbeat:	rapid
	Perspiration:	always
	Stomach Condition:	rolling
	Muscle Tension:	relaxed
	Breathing:	short quick breaths

LÉPINE

<i>Desire</i>	To have an easy time of things.	
<i>Will</i>	Weak. Does as little as possible to get by.	
<i>Moral Stance</i>	Malleable. Changes to fit the situation.	
<i>Decorum</i>	Trips when trying to move furniture and seems to take no notice of Bélise's criticisms, and regrets to answer the door when Julien arrives.	
<i>Adjectives</i>	Clumsy, stoic, lazy	
<i>Character mood-intensity</i>	Heartbeat:	slow
	Perspiration:	very little
	Stomach Condition:	light
	Muscle Tension:	very loose
	Breathing:	slow and deliberate

JULIEN

<i>Desire</i>	To be left alone.	
<i>Will</i>	Subservient. Julien always does what he is told, even if he does not agree/understand.	
<i>Moral Stance</i>	Shallow. He will do what is necessary to get ahead.	
<i>Decorum</i>	Enters the home without permission and talks back to Philaminte.	
<i>Adjectives</i>	Feisty, overworked, irritable, excitable	
<i>Character mood-intensity</i>	Heartbeat:	fast
	Perspiration:	heavy
	Stomach Condition:	tight
	Muscle Tension:	tight
	Breathing:	fast, impatient

NOTARY

<i>Desire</i>	To follow the proper procedures.	
<i>Will</i>	Strong. Notary will not let others influence how he does his job.	
<i>Moral Stance</i>	High morals. Will not personally or let others abuse his position or power.	
<i>Decorum</i>	Tries to move the wedding along as fast as possible, and reach an agreement on the groom. Doesn't back down from Philaminte when she criticizes him.	
<i>Adjectives</i>	By the book, calm, professional	
<i>Character mood-intensity</i>	Heartbeat:	normal
	Perspiration:	very little
	Stomach Condition:	tranquil
	Muscle Tension:	none
	Breathing:	relaxed

IV. Other Questions

What is the story I am trying to tell?

The Learned Ladies is a play about a group of well meaning but misguided women who are taken advantage of by a money hungry fraud looking to cash in on their naïveté. They are fooled by his flashy outward appearance and stories, failing to see there is little substance behind his well-groomed façade.

What should the audience experience be?

This I am still wrestling with. Am I looking for sympathy for the women? Yes and no. I need to do more thinking on the subject.

PART THREE: Questions Analysis

1.1

- 169
- What time day is it?
 - What time of year is it?
 - Where are we? What room in the house?
 - What is their relationship? Sisters? Which is the older?
 - Where did they just come from?
 - What brought them into this room? What was said previously?
 - Is this the first Armande has heard of Henriette's plan to marry?
- 170
- Why is Armande's reaction so intense? Is it all about sex?
 - Is Henriette dodging the sex question on purpose – being coy?
 - Is she goading her sister?
 - “bondage” - does it carry a double meaning?
 - Does Armande think her sister slow/stupid? “oh dear” – is that condescending? Is she moving into damage control mode?
- 171
- “common natures”? What are they?
 - “a mother to whom all pay honour” – who are “all”? Those in the house? Those outside of it?
 - “low objects” – penis joke?
- 172
- Does Armande suspect all along that she wants to marry Clitandre? If yes, is she trying more to persuade her from marrying, or from marrying him?
 - Why is Henriette tiptoeing around the subject of Clitandre? Is she afraid of her sister's reaction? Does she feel she's done wrong?
- 173
- What was the nature of the Clitandre/Armande relationship? How long were they together? Under what circumstances are they no longer?
 - Does Henriette feel any resentment being second choice?
 - Does Henriette believe that Clitandre's “intense desire for [Armande] has faded”?
- 174
- Is Henriette telling the truth when she says she believes him?
 - How does she see Clitandre? Does he see her as well?

1.2

- 175
- Where did Clitandre enter? From where is he arriving?
 - Has he heard any of this conversation?
 - What is his reaction to being put on the spot like this?

- Does Armande really not want him to reveal who he loves more? Does she believe it is her, or does she not want her Bélise-style bubble burst?
 - “I’ll not join” – because she knows the answer? Does she want to save embarrassment? Deluding herself like Bélise?
 - Is Clitandre being unnecessarily cruel to Armande? Does he take any pleasure in saying this publicly?
- 176
- Is this the first time Clitandre and Armande have discussed their break-up?
 - Does Henriette know the details? If yes, whom would she have heard them from: her suitor or her sister?
 - Did Armande believe she still had a chance with Clitandre?
 - How emotional does Armande get? Why does Henriette have to calm her down?
 - Does Armande take any pleasure in knowing that their mother won’t approve? Has she been waiting to play this card?
- 177
- Did Henriette really not consider her parents’ reaction until now, or is she humouring Armande?
 - Does Clitandre leave right away, or does he stay in the room? Does he hear the remainder of this conversation? What are the implications if he does or does not?
 - How deep does the sibling rivalry run? Is Henriette gloating over her “win”?
 - Does she believe that Armande will help her? Or is it an olive branch?
 - Does Henriette think she will need Armande’s support to convince her mother? How worried is she about parental approval?
- 178
- How much status does Armande gain by refusing?
 - Does the argument heat up here? How much?
 - “I shall not stoop to answer that” – an admission?
 - “your self control is great and I commend it” – honest? Ironic? A “fuck you”?
 - What is the impetus for Armande to leave? What is the final straw? Where does she go?
- 1.3
- 179
- How unnerved was Armande at the end of the last scene?
 - Does Henriette think Clitandre was too frank?
 - Why does Clitandre think to seek Chrysale’s permission first? Is he unaware of the family dynamic? Does he believe he will have an easier time with the father?
 - Is Henriette apprehensive to send him to ask Philaminte?

- Why does Henriette explain the dynamic to him? Is he not at the house often? After dating two of the daughters, shouldn't he know? Is this authorial exposition?
 - Do Philaminte and Bélise not like Clitandre?
- 180
- Why is Clitandre not willing to “humour” and “indulge” them?
 - Is his speech ironic?
 - How does he know Trissotin? Does the poet's association with the salon colour his views on the learned ladies?
 - How much contact has Henriette had with Trissotin?
 - Henriette's last speech – does Clitandre have a history of being a jerk? Why does she warn him about manners?
- 181
- Why is there so much resentment by Clitandre toward Trissotin? How much of his writing has Clitandre read?
 - Is this bashing of the poet also flirting between the couple? To what extent and how much are they each enjoying this?
 - What was Clitandre doing at the Palais? What was Trissotin doing there? Are they both regular guests?
 - Is Clitandre's story about Trissotin true?
- 182
- Does Henriette also see Bélise?
 - When does Henriette leave? Where does she go? Does she stay in the room to spy on the conversation? If yes, does Clitandre know?
 - Does Clitandre believe that Bélise will help him, or is it a stall tactic to avoid Philaminte?
- 1.4**
- 183
- Where did Bélise come from?
 - Have the two ever been alone together before?
 - Why does Bélise cut him off where she does? Why not on the word “lover”?
 - Why does she not want to hear that Clitandre loves her? Why does she want all the professions in code?
 - Has Clitandre seen this side of Bélise before? What is his initial reaction?
 - Why does he not humour her? Why disregard Henriette's advice?
- 184
- What kinds of novels does Bélise read? Romance? Erotic? Does she hide this from everyone else (especially Philaminte)?
 - Is there a mounting frustration in Clitandre? Why does he not change tactics when he is clearly losing?
 - What is the extent of Bélise's crush on Clitandre? How many of his

“glances” has she caught?

- 185
- Why does Bérise decide to leave? Where is she going?
 - Is she really blushing?

- 186
- Why does he decide to look “elsewhere” instead of going directly to Philaminte? Is he afraid of her?
 - Does he have anyone in mind?

2.1

- 189
- What time of day is it? How much time has passed since the end of Act 1?
 - How long had Ariste and Clitandre been speaking for?
 - How did they come to find each other?
 - Where is Clitandre going?
 - With who will Ariste “urge and plead”? Chrysale? Does he have any intention of going to Philaminte?
 - If Clitandre went to Ariste to get support from Chrysale, why has he decided to circumvent Philaminte?
 - How would Ariste finish that sentence?

2.2

- 190
- Where did Chrysale come from?
 - What is his profession?
 - Which is the elder brother?
 - “do you know what brings me here?” – did Ariste come to the home solely to speak on behalf of Clitandre?
 - If Clitandre calls almost every day, why doesn’t he know how the family dynamic? (!?!)
 - Why does Ariste not get to the point right away? Why test the water?
- 191
- How long has Chrysale known Clitandre? Had he thought of him as a possible husband for his daughter before?
 - How did Chrysale know Clitandre’s father? Did they meet in Rome or know each other beforehand?
 - Is Clitandre’s father still alive?
 - Why did Chrysale go to Rome?
 - What does Chrysale mean when he calls Clitandre’s father “a fine man”?
 - How much does Ariste know about Rome? Has he heard these stories before?

- 192
- Is Chrysale exaggerating this story?

2.3

- 193
- Why does Bélise not reveal herself as soon as she enters the room?
 - Where did she come from?
 - “He loves my daughter?” –is this the first time he has heard/thought of this? What is his reaction?
 - When has Ariste seen Clitandre “dote upon” Henriette? Has the plan been for him to help arrange the wedding all along?
 - Why does Bélise choose this moment to speak?
 - How does she deliver the news of Clitandre’s “true” love?
- 194
- What is Ariste’s reaction to Bélise’s news?
- 195
- Does Bélise often confide in her brother’s this way? Is this a first?
 - Is Bélise upset at their reaction because it is common for them to dismiss her like that? Do others have the same reaction?
 - Who are Dorante, Damis, Cléante and Valère? What is their relationship to the rest of the family?
- 196
- Are Ariste’s questions honest?
- 197
- Does Ariste let Bélise down gently (“you’re prone to fantasies, I fear”)?
 - Why has Chrysale remained silent in this conversation until now?
 - Where does Bélise go?

2.4

- 198
- “and growing madder daily” – is this type of behaviour common? Is she prone to other fantasies as well?
- 199
- Does Ariste think Philaminte won’t consent? Is he goading Chrysale?
 - Does Chrysale believe Philaminte will consent?
 - Why does Ariste push so hard for Philaminte’s consent?
 - Does he go to Henriette?

2.5

- 200
- Where did Martine come from?
 - How long has she worked there?

- What is her status among the servants?

- 201
- Why doesn't Martine tell Chrysale why she's been fired? Does she not know herself? If she doesn't know, why not tell him that?

2.6

- 202
- Did Chrysale notice Philaminte and Bélise entering?
 - Where did the women come from? Why are they coming to this room?
 - Has Bélise told Philaminte of Clitandre's intended proposal?

- 203
- Why doesn't Philaminte tell Chrysale why she fired the maid? Does she not believe her own justification, or does she not want her authority questioned?

- 204
- Why did Philaminte not tell Martine why she was fired?

- 205
- Can Philaminte hear Chrysale's asides to Martine?
 - "far worse than that?" – what does he think Martine did?

- 206
- Who has been tutoring Martine?
 - Is Chrysale relieved when he is told what Martine has done?
 - Why does Chrysale agree that Martine's crime was grave? Why doesn't Philaminte believe her?

- 207
- Why has Bélise been quiet until now?

- 208
- Is Martine being intentionally provocative at any point?
 - Who/what are Passy, Pontoise, and Chaillot? How has Martine heard of them? What is her relationship to them/it?

- 209
- No questions.

- 210
- No questions.

2.7

- 211
- Has Philaminte fired other servants for similar "trifles"?
 - How long have they been married?

- 212
- No questions.

- 213
- How was Chrysale going to finish the sentence started with "for"?

- Has Chrysale never told the women how he feels about the salon interrupting his peace and quiet?
 - Does Chrysale press his own collars?
 - Have the women's "gadgets" taken over the whole home?
- 214
- How long has Chrysale been holding this rant in?
 - Do all the servants follow the lead of the learned ladies? Are they forced to? Do they enjoy it?
- 215
- When has Chrysale heard Trissotin's poetry? Was he forced to attend poetry readings?
 - Where does Bélise go?
- 2.8**
- 216
- Why doesn't Chrysale protest Philaminte's suggestion that Henriette marry Trissotin?
- 217
- Was Philaminte always planning on telling Henriette of her marriage when Trissotin next arrived?
 - Was she always planning on telling Chrysale? Did she only proffer her thoughts because he raised the subject?
 - Where does she go?
- 2.9**
- 218
- Where did ARTISTE come from?
- 219
- How does Ariste know Trissotin?
 - Have they met, or does he know of him through Chrysale?
- 220
- Is Ariste being ironic with "what strategy! How nimble witted!"?
 - Did Ariste see this coming?
- 221
- Is Ariste married?
 - How long has he wanted to give this speech to Chrysale?
- 222
- No questions.
- 223
- "whatever the cost" – what is Chrysale referring to? Dignity? Peace? His marriage? His daughter?

3.1

- 227
- How much time has passed since the end of Act 2?
 - How long has Trissotin been there? Just arrived? A little while?
 - How often is he over?
 - Is this the beginning of the meeting?
 - Why is LÉPINE in the room? Where has he been?
- 228
- Did he really compose the poem on the front step? Is he guarding himself against criticism?
 - If the meeting did just start, do they always begin with Trissotin reading? Does anyone else read?
 - Does Trissotin attend all the meetings? How often are they held?

3.2

- 229
- Where is Henriette coming from/going? Was she trying to avoid them?
 - Does she have any idea what the “sweet surprise” is going to be?
 - Does Trissotin know of the intended match between him and Henriette? Was it his idea? Is he aware she will be told today?
- 230
- Why is Bélise trying to move things along? Does she know of the marriage?
 - Why does LÉPINE fall? Does it happen often?
 - Where does he go?
- 231
- Were they standing previously? Did they rise when LÉPINE fell?
 - Who is the princess Trissotin refers to?
 - What is “Attic salt”? Why did he add it?
 - How often does Bélise interrupt? Is this something she does often?
- 232
- Who is “Princess Uranie”? Did she really exist?
 - Why did Trissotin write a sonnet for her?
 - Does he always stop after a quatrain/tercet? Is he fishing for praise?
- 233
- What is Trissotin’s reaction to the effusive praise? Was it expected?
 - Why does he repeat the first quatrain? Still wants more praise?
- 234
- What prompts him to move on to the second quatrain?
 - How is Bélise breathless?
 - Does Armande always agree with her mother?
- 235
- “a whole poem in a phrase” – what does she mean?
 - Why does Trissotin remain silent? What is his reaction to the praise?

- 236
- “Ah! Well” – he does not answer her question. Why not?
 - Does Armande interrupt before he can answer? Is she trying to impress Trissotin and/or Philaminte?
 - Why does Trissotin repeat the whole quatrain when he is only asked to repeat one line?
 - How excited do the ladies get during this exchange? Is it sexual?
- 237
- Is this a typical reaction to his poems?
- 238
- What is Henreitte’s reaction during the reading? Is she paying any attention? Does anyone take notice of her?
- 239
- How was Trissotin going to finish his line?
 - Why does Philaminte feel the need to cut him off?
 - Why does Bélise finally notice Henriette? Was she trying to sneak away? Looking bored?
 - “wishing to be a wit” – is she referring to Trissotin? Do others think she means herself?
 - “perhaps my verses bored her” – does he believe this?
 - What does Henriette mean by “here below”?
- 240
- Have they been waiting for the epigram?
 - Does Philaminte hear what Henriette says and jump in to avoid embarrassment? Or does she not hear her at all?
 - Do the women speak to Henriette here? Are they trying to engage her?
- 241
- Why does he repeat the last six lines of the epigram?
 - Does Trissotin stop to allow the ladies to speak or do they interrupt?
 - What is a Laïs?
 - Do the women understand the reference? Are they trying to cover their lack of understanding?
- 242
- How long and detailed are Philaminte’s plans for the academy?
 - Has Trissotin heard of this before?
 - How long have the ladies had the idea?
- 243
- Has Philaminte mentioned the academy to scholars who “condescend” to her? Or is it a more general comment?
- 244
- “Descartes supports my notions” – taking credit? Boasting?
 - What are Descartes “falling words” and “whirling motions”?
 - “conclave” – why would the meetings be secret? Aren’t they now?
 - “I have seen steeples” – is Bélise trying to one-up her sister-in-law?

- 245
 - What is HENREITTE'S reaction to all this? Had she heard of the plans before?
 - How long is the list of banned words?
 - Does Trissotin believe the plan is "wondrous"?
- 246
 - "only we and our friends have wit" – is Trissotin a "we" or a "friend"?
 - Is Armande flirting? Does she have any attraction to him?

3.3

- 247
 - Is Trissotin expecting Vadius?
 - Why does Henriette choose this moment to try and escape? What is her opening?
- 248
 - How long have Trissotin and Vadius known each other?
 - Have any of the ladies heard of him?
 - Where was Vadius previous to this? Why did he want to come here? What has Trissotin told him?
 - Why does Vadius' Greek excite the women so much? Do they speak Greek?
 - Why does Vadius not speak when he enters? Why does he wait?
- 249
 - "a certain Greek" – who? Why not name him/her?
- 250
 - Why the effusive praise back and forth?
 - Are they putting on a show for the ladies?
 - Does this happen often?
- 251
 - Why does Trissotin not continue praising Vadius after "statues of you would rise on every side"?
- 252
 - Why does Trissotin interrupt before Vadius can start? Is he looking for more accolades?
 - What is Trissotin's initial reaction to Vadius' insult? Does he believe it at first?
 - Does Vadius want to have this conversation? How hard is he trying to get his poem read? Does he want the same effusive praise as Trissotin has received from the ladies?
 - Does Trissotin keep his cool at this point?
- 253
 - What is Vadius' reaction when he finds out the truth? How fast does he backpedal? Does he think he can get his foot out of his mouth?
 - What is the women's reaction to this?

- 254
 - Is Trissotin just being spiteful, or does he really find Vadius a bad poet? Was he lying earlier?
 - Do they almost come to blows, or is the fight purely words?
- 255
 - No questions.
- 256
 - Who is telling truth? Trissotin or Vadius?
 - Has anyone else here seen the satires?
 - When does Vadius decide to leave? Where is he going to go?
 - “never certain of the victory” – does Trissotin think he always wins? Does he think Boileau does?
 - Will this “duel” ever happen? Will the two kiss and make up?

3.4

- 257
 - What is the feeling in the room immediately after Vadius’ exit? How long until Trissotin speaks?
 - How will Philaminte “mend the quarrel”?
 - Why does she choose this moment to bring up the proposal?
 - Does Henriette see where this is going?
- 258
 - “I, Mother?” – was she expecting Armande to be with Trissotin?
 - Does Philaminte expect her to be happy with the match?
 - Why does Bélise relinquish her “claim” on Trissotin so easily? Is this hard for her to say?
- 259
 - How would Philaminte finish “girl, if you dare...”? Why does she stop herself?
 - Where do she, Trissotin, and Bélise go?

3.5

- 260
 - Does Armande see this as her chance to get Clitandre back? Did she know of this before hand?
 - Does Henriette think her sister will take him? A desperate play?
 - Armande – is she being smug? Self-satisfied?
 - Is this new information for Armande? What did she know about the marriage?
- 261
 - No questions.

3.6

- 262
- Where have Chrysale, Ariste, and Clitandre been? Were they together?
 - Does Chrysale anticipate a fight with Henriette? Why is he so strict? Trying to lay down his authority?
 - Armande – how does she react to this?
 - “Your mother’s blessing too, is necessary” – a trump card? Sticking to Henriette and Chrysale?
- 263
- Is Chrysale (again) trying to assert his status? Practicing on his daughters?
 - Does Armande leave to immediately tell Philaminte of this?
 - “conduct her to her room” – why? What are they going to do there?
 - Do the lovers leave before Chrysale and Ariste?
 - Does Chrysale not foresee any confrontation with his wife? Does Ariste? Do they care?

4.1

- 267
- What is Philaminte doing at the top of this scene?
 - How much time has passed since the end of Act 3?
 - How long has the conversation between Armande and Philaminte been going on?
 - Is Armande willingly sharing this information? How does she feel about “tattling” on her sister?
 - Is Armande embellishing at all? What is her agenda?
 - Why does Philaminte approve of Clitandre for Armande, but not Henriette?
- 268
- What about his manner didn’t she like? Is this revisionist history?
 - Is it all about the poetry?

4.2

- 269
- Where is Clitandre coming from?
 - Did he expect to walk in on this conversation? How much has he heard from the end of the previous scene?
 - Why does Clitandre not reveal himself right away?
 - Does Armande believe “philosophy can give full consolation”?
 - Why is Armande working so hard to make her mother believe she is impartial? Is she also trying to convince herself?
 - Is what Armande says of Clitandre – he spoke of her with any respect – true?

- “despite your great reputation” – does he have a great reputation? Is she blowing smoke up his ass?
- 270
- Did he really insult the poems?
 - How much longer would Armande have gone on if Clitandre didn’t interrupt?
 - Why did he interrupt at that moment? Why not earlier, as soon as the first insult?
 - “how have I wronged you?” – an honest question?
 - “vicious grudge” – is
 - Is Armande admitting she still has feelings for Clitandre?
- 271
- “fickleness” – was Armande herself not being fickle?
 - Does Armande believe her own answers to Clitandre’s questions? Is she becoming like Bélise?
 - Armande blames Clitandre? Is there resentment because he wouldn’t accept her terms for their relationship (i.e. no marriage and no sex)?
 - “did I forsake you...” – is this a rhetorical question? What is his tactic?
 - Does either of them accept any blame?
- 272
- Is Philaminte being in the room changing his behaviour?
 - Have they had this conversation before?
 - Is Armande trying to win him back?
 - Is Clitandre intentionally provoking her? Is he trying to let her down gently?
 - How do you pronounce “bestial”?
- 273
- Was this Armande’s plan all along? Was she hoping if Henriette was already married he would “settle” for her?
 - “to grant the thing...” – is this a proposal by Armande?
 - Why has Philaminte not spoken until now? (uncharacteristically quiet)
 - What is Clitandre’s tone when speaking to Philaminte? Why not choose a more diplomatic approach?
 - Does Clitandre consider the marriage to Armande?
 - Does he still love her? What are his feelings?
- 274
- Why continue to insult Trissotin? Has the tactic been at all successful to this point?
 - What does Philaminte mean by “different eyes”? More intelligent? Women’s eyes (i.e. sexual)?
 - Where would the conversation if Trissotin didn’t enter?

4.3

- 275
- What brings Trissotin here? Has he been in the house this whole time? If so, why not bring this “news” earlier?
 - How did he hear about the comet? Is this true, or made up to impress the women (based on their conversation re: the moon, earlier)?
 - Is Philaminte at all interested in the news? Why does she change the subject?
 - Does she not want to talk about it in front of an “ignoramus”?
 - Where did Trissotin hear this “news”? Did he make it up? Is he trying to impress the women with his knowledge of the universe?
 - Why does Clitandre say nothing to Trissotin when he first arrives?
- 276
- When does Trissotin catch on that Clitandre is insulting him?
- 277
- How composed is Trissotin in this scene? How composed is Clitandre?
 - How does this compare to the Trissotin/Vadius fight in Act 3?
 - How pleasurable is this exchange for Clitandre?
 - What are Philaminte and Armande doing? Why are they not saying anything?
- 278
- Why does Philaminte decide to speak now?
 - Why does Armande?
 - How would Philaminte finish the sentence “I think sir –”?
 - How would Armande finish her sentence?
- 279
- How coy is Clitandre being? Does he think he is winning this war of words? Does he think he is losing?
 - Why does he decide to leave?
 - Does Philaminte know of the “gibes” Trissotin has received?
 - Does Trissotin know Clitandre or just recognize him from court?
 - Why does Trissotin bring up the court?
- 280
- Why is Clitandre defending the court so fiercely? Is this authorial voice shining through?
 - What is his position at the court?
- 281
- How was Philaminte going to finish her sentence?
 - What feelings is she referring to?

4.4

- 282
- How did Julien get in the house?
 - Why did he not go to the servants first?

- Will Julien “bear in mind” the admonition? Does he care at all?
- Why is Philaminte’s reaction of the “rules” being broken so small?
- Did Vadius write this note just after he left?
- Did Trissotin tell Vadius of his intentions, or did Vadius infer them?
- How does Trissotin react to the letter? Does he feel the jig is up?

- 283
- Why does Philaminte not believe the message?
 - Why does it prompt her to move up the wedding?
 - Why does she send Armande for the notary and to tell Henriette? Why not do it herself?
 - Why is there no protest from Clitandre? Does he think he is defeated?
 - Where do Philaminte and Trissotin go?

4.5

- 284
- Is this a sincere apology?
 - Where does Clitandre’s confidence come from? Does he have a plan?
 - Why does Armande “hope” her fears “will prove ill-founded”? Is she lying?
 - Why does Clitandre believe that Armande will help them? Is he flirting with her?
- 285
- Why does Armande agree to “serve his cause”? What causes the change of heart?
 - Where does she go? Is she going to help him? If not, why did she say she would? If yes, what is she going to do?
 - Why does Armande not leave with her mother and aunt? Is she trying to stick it to him?

4.6

- 286
- Where have Chrysale, Ariste, and Henriette been? Were they together? Have they been looking for Clitandre?
 - Why is Henriette quiet when Clitandre reveals the news?
- 287
- Does Chrysale have a plan? Why is he able to promise Clitandre he will marry his daughter?
 - Where does Chrysale plan on going? What is their “errand”?

4.7

- 288
 - Is Henriette afraid of being coerced? Does she fear she'll be forced to marry Trissotin?
 - How confident is she in the plan?
 - Is she serious about the convent? Has that been her plan all along?
- 289
 - How do the lovers say goodbye? Is there a kiss? Do they think this might be the last time they see each other?

5.1

- 293
 - How much time has passed since the end of Act 4?
 - How long have Henriette and Trissotin been alone together? Was this arranged? By who? If not, how did they end up here?
 - Is she going to try and talk him out of it? Does she think it will work? Is she stalling?
 - Have they ever spoken before (besides pleasantries)?
 - "dowry of some size" – why use this tactic?
- 297
 - How confident in Henriette here? Does she believe herself? Is there any doubt?
 - Why does Trissotin decide to leave? Is he going for reinforcements (i.e. Philaminte)? Does he hear or see the Notary?
 - "we shall see" – is there menace here? Does he know something we don't? What is he willing to do to ensure this marriage happens?

5.2

- 298
 - Why did Chrysale need help getting Martine?
 - Does Chrysale think Henriette won't obey him? Why is he always so authoritarian with her?
 - How sensitive is Chrysale re: his position in the home?
- 299
 - Is Chrysale fishing for compliments? Is he looking for Henriette to bolster his confidence?
 - How blustery is he being? Does anyone in the room (including him) believe his confidence?
 - Is he scared of what Philaminte's reaction to seeing Martine will be?
- 300
 - No questions.
- 301
 - Does Henriette believe her father will come through?

- Why does Clitandre notice that Philaminte and the NOTARY are coming?
- What is everyone's reaction when they see Philaminte? Does Chrysale stand his ground?

302 • Is Martine afraid of Philaminte?

5.3

303 • Has the NOTARY just arrived? How long has he been there?
 • Why do they decide to enter the room now? Will the wedding take place in this room? Why?
 • How much attention does NOTARY pay to Philaminte? Does he often get these kinds of requests?

304 • Is Philaminte surprised by Chrysale's strong stance? Does he often "rebel" against her?

305 • How does the NOTARY react to being pushed around by Chrysale and Philaminte? Does he often see this sort of behaviour?
 • Is Philaminte challenging Chrysale ("shall my wishes be defied?")?

306 • How did Chrysale find out Trissotin wants to marry only for money? Who told him?
 • Why has Armande been so quiet? How has she helped Clitandre and Henreitte's case?
 • How hard does Philaminte have to put her foot down? Is she more and more thrown off by Chrysale's "defiance?"
 • Why does Martine interject when she does? Why doesn't Philaminte react?

307 • Does Martine often take Chrysale's side?
 • "Sound thinking" – does Chrysale agree with everything Martine is saying? Does she go too far for him?

308 • Who is Philaminte talking to ("we must let her chatter until she's through.")?
 • Does Martine often go on and on?
 • "Politely listened to all her speeches?" – does she not normally? Is this a concession on Philaminte's part?

309 • Has Philaminte decided this has gone on long enough? Why let it go on this long at all? Why "finish" this now?

- What is Armande's reaction to Philaminte's suggestion she marry Clitandre?
- Why does Philaminte bring this up again?
- Does Chrysale really consider this option?

5.4

- 310
 - Where has Ariste been?
 - Why does Philaminte read her letter before the wedding is over? Has she been waiting for a letter?
- 311
 - What was the lawsuit about?
 - Why is Philaminte unconcerned she has lost it?
 - "shaken so" – is Chrysale more concerned than Philaminte? Why?
- 312
 - Do neither Chrysale nor Philaminte recognize ARTISTE'S handwriting?
 - What is "pelf"?
 - Does Trissotin try to sneak out before Philaminte draws attention to him?
 - Why does he not better try to cover his motivations for leaving?
 - Is Philaminte embarrassed she was wrong about Trissotin? Does she take this out on him?
- 313
 - Does Philaminte chase Trissotin out of the house? How hasty is his exit?
 - Why does Philaminte see Clitandre as appropriate now, when he wasn't earlier? What has changed?
- 314
 - Why does Ariste wait to reveal his plan?
 - How long had he been devising the plan? When did he put it in motion?
- 315
 - "our firmness has achieved success" – does Chrysale believe his actions changed his wife's mind?
 - "shall you sacrifice me to their happiness?" – what does Armande mean by this?
 - Why do Clitandre and Henriette not speak after the ruse has been revealed?
- 316
 - Is Chrysale proud of himself ("just as I told you to")?
 - What happens immediately after the last line?

PART FOUR: GLOSSARY

ACT 1

prosaic	commonplace; unromantic
profession	declaration
fatuous	silly; pointless
lineaments	distinctive characteristics, especially of the face
brook	tolerate; allow
gross	vulgar, unrefined
disdained	the feeling that something is unworthy of one's consideration or respect; contempt
imbibed	absorb or assimilate
divine	discover by guesswork or intuition
decorous	in keeping with good taste and propriety; polite and restrained
addled	made unable to think clearly; confused
bents	a natural talent or inclination
natures	the basic or inherent features of something
imperatives	an essential or urgent thing

ACT 2

broach	raise a sensitive or difficult subject for discussion
obliquity	not explicit or direct in addressing a point
chimeras	a thing that is hoped or wished for, but in fact is illusory or impossible to achieve
chit	young woman regarded with disappointment for immaturity and lack of respect

Vaugelas	French grammarian; one of the original members of the <i>Académie Française</i>
pleonasm	use of more words than is necessary to convey meaning
solecisms	grammatical mistakes
<i>Passy</i>	neighbourhood in Paris
<i>Pontoise</i>	neighbourhood in Paris
<i>Chaillot</i>	neighbourhood in Paris
caprice	sudden and unaccountable change in mood or behaviour
trifle	thing of little value or importance
barbarisms	Word or expression that is badly formed
cacophonies	harsh, discordant mixture of sounds.
Malherbe	François de – French poet, critic, and translator (1555-1628); preached greater technical perfection, and especially greater simplicity and purity in vocabulary and versification; reformed French poetry
Balzac	NOT Honoré de – Jean-Louis Guez de Balzac (1597-1654); elected to <i>Académie Française</i> in 1634; reformed French prose
Plutarch	Greek historian (46-120 CE)
solicitude	cause or concern
trousseaus	the clothes, household linens, and belongings collected by a bride for her marriage
ape	imitate the behaviour or manner of
pedant	a person who is excessively concerned with minor details and rules or with displaying academic learning
besotted	strongly infatuated
extols	praise excessively
gallants	a man who pays special attention to women; chivalrous; brave, heroic

dotes	be extremely and uncritically fond of
ardor	enthusiasm or passion
hussy	an impudent or immoral girl or woman
trollop	a woman perceived as sexually disreputable or promiscuous
abide	accept or act in accordance with
erudite	having or showing great knowledge or learning
meet	suitable, fit, proper (archaic)
censure	express disapproval of
aggregate	a material or structure formed from a loosely compacted mass of fragments of particles
chagrin	distress or embarrassment at having failed or been humiliated
grossly	unattractively large or bloated
rancorous	bitterness or resentfulness, esp. when long-standing
ire	anger
plebeian	of or belonging to lower social classes; lacking in refinement
bade	command or order to do something (archaic)

ACT 3

Attic	referring to Athens/Attica; something that adds freshness or potency
quatrain	stanza of four lines with alternating rhymes
prudence	acting or showing care and thought for the future
drowsed	be half asleep
tercets	group of three lines rhyming together or connected by a rhyme from an adjacent tercet

eglantines	European wild rose with fragrant leaves and flowers
epigram	short satirical poem
vermillion	brilliant red pigment
Laïs	Greek courtesan
brocade	rich fabric, usually silk, woven with a raised pattern, typically with a gold or silver thread
Epicurus	Greek philosopher and physicist
conclaves	secret meetings
promulgate	make well known
antipathies	deep seated dislike
mordant	having sharp and critical quality; biting
vex	make someone feel annoyed, frustrated, or worried, esp. with trivial matter
profane	treat with disrespect
savant	learned person
ecologues	short poem
Virgil	Roman poet (70-19 BCE); wrote three major works
Theocritus	Greek poet (310-250 BCE); model for Virgil
Horace	Roman poet of the Augustus period; well known satirist; known for his odes
<i>rondeaux</i>	mixed form of poem: two rhymes w/ verses that repeat
madrigal	a part-song for several voices, esp. in the renaissance, usually without instrumental accompaniment
<i>ballades</i>	poem normally composed of three stanzas and an envoy, the last line of the opening stanza is used as a refrain, and the same rhymes, strictly limited in number, recur throughout

<i>bouts-rimés</i>	rhyming bits
distract	distracted; absentminded
poetaster	someone who writes inferior poetry
Parnassus	Greek mountain (i.e. in Greece); home of the muses and therefore home of music, poetry, and learning
crazy-quilt	patchwork quilt with patches of various shapes and sizes
Boileau	French poet and critic (1636-1711). Friend of Molière and Racine.
Barbin	Molière's publisher
countenance	support
overweening	showing excessive confidence or pride
fractious	easily irritated; bad tempered; difficult to control, unruly
deathless	immortal (humorous)
lustrous	having luster; shining
Stoics	ancient Greek philosophy that believed virtue (the highest good) could be obtained through knowledge and that the wise live in harmony with the divine Reason (that also governs nature) and are indifferent to changes of fortune and pleasure and pain
symposium	conference or meeting
verve	vigour and spirit or enthusiasm
ethos	the characteristic spirit or a culture, era, or community as manifested by its beliefs and aspirations (or: nature, disposition)
pathos	a quality that evokes pity or sadness
maligned	speak about in a spitefully critical nature
prate	talk foolishly or tediously about something
fount	a source of a desirable commodity or quality; a receptacle in a church for the water used in baptism, typically a freestanding stone structure

ACT 4

prepossessing	attractive or appealing in appearance; usually negative
approbation	approval; praise
perique	irritation or resentment resulting from a slight
august	respected and impressive
fusty	smelling stale, damp, stuffy; old fashioned in attitude or style
myopic	lack of imagination, foresight, or intellectual insight; nearsightedness
Catullus	Roman poet known for his love poems
Terence	Roman comic playwright
espouse	adopt or support
fervent	having or displaying a passionate intensity
carnal	relating to physical, esp. sexual needs
vortex	something regarded as a whirling mass
begot	give rise to; bring about
gibe	an insulting or mocking remark; a taunt
sinecures	a position requiring little or no work but giving the bearer status or financial benefit
admonition	warn or reprimand someone firmly
requite	revenge or retaliate; return a favour
sage	a profoundly wise man; having, showing, or indicating profound wisdom
unction	a manner of expression arising or apparently arising from deep emotion, esp. as intended to flatter
inconstant	frequently changing, variable, irregular; not faithful or dependable

ACT 5

dissension	disagreement that leads to discord
talent	unit of currency used by ancient Greeks and Romans
stratagem	a plan or scheme, esp. one used to outwit an opponent or achieve an end
recriminations	an accusation in response to one from someone else
pelf	money; especially gained through a dishonest or dishonourable way
milksop	a person who is indecisive and lacks courage
incline	make willing or disposed to do something
ides	a day falling roughly in the middle of each month (15 th of March, May, July, October; 13 th of other months) from which other dates were calculated
franc	basic monetary unit of France until the Euro
felicity	happiness, joy
equanimity	calm; level headedness
drachma	silver coin of ancient Greece; monetary unit of Greece until introduction of Euro
crown	coin (British or otherwise)
contentious	causing or likely to cause an argument; (person) given to arguing or provoking argument
chides	scold or rebuke
capricious	given to sudden unaccountable changes of mood or behaviour
calends	first day of the month on an ancient Roman calendar
buffetings	the action of striking someone or something repeatedly and violently; a blow
booby	a stupid or childish person
avarice	extreme greed for wealth for material gain

CHARACTER NAMES AND THEIR ORIGINS/MEANINGS

PHILAMINTE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “lover of the truth”• Also – “one who defends”
CHRYSALE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Root comes from Greek for “golden”• Same root as “chrysalis” – does Chrysale come out of his shell at the end of the play?
HENRIETTE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feminine form of “Henri”• Means “mistress of the house”• Sister-in-law of Louis XIV named same
ARMANDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feminine form of “Armand”• Means “warrior”• Molière’s wife shared same name
CLITANDRE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Means “famous as a man” or “famous for manliness”
BÉLISE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changing one consonant (to “betise”) could mean “silliness, foolishness, folly, stupidity, obtuseness”• Break it down: “bé” = misunderstanding; “elise” = consecrated to God; does name mean foolishness of devotion?
ARISTE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Means “the best”
TRISSOTIN	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Name derived from Abbé Cotin• Means “three time stupid” or “three time a fool”
MARTINE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The “ine” suffix used almost exclusively by 17th century peasants• Feminine form of “Martin”• Means “martial” or “warlike” – derived from Mars
VADIUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Suffix “ius” indicates he belongs to community of scholars• May come from Latin “vadis (to walk), or Latin vadosus (shallow, or full of shallows)
LÉPINE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Means “the thorn” (thorn in the side?)
JULIEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Means “youthful”
NOTARY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No name given

PART FIVE: ACTION ANALYSIS (BALL GRAPH)

STASIS:

At the beginning of the play Philaminte, her daughter Armande, and her sister-in-law Bélise run a salon in their home with dreams of opening an academy that would be the most influential in all of France. They have converted their servants (save one) to their learned ways. Philaminte's husband, Chrysale, is frustrated by their actions but because he fears his wife's temper he tolerates them, even though he cannot stand Trissotin, the pedantic poet who frequents their meetings. Meanwhile, Henriette (second daughter to Philaminte and Chrysale) is being courted by Clitandre, whose romantic advances were previously spurned by the jealous Armande.

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TURNING POINT #1:

INTRUSION – Chrysale gives permission for Clitandre and Henriette to marry, without first consulting his wife.

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TURNING POINT #2:

MAJOR CRISIS – Philaminte announces that Henriette is to marry Trissotin.

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TURNING POINT #3:

CLIMAX – the arrival of Ariste, in possession of letters from the attorneys of both Philaminte and Chrysale, arrives at the wedding of Henriette and Trissotin.

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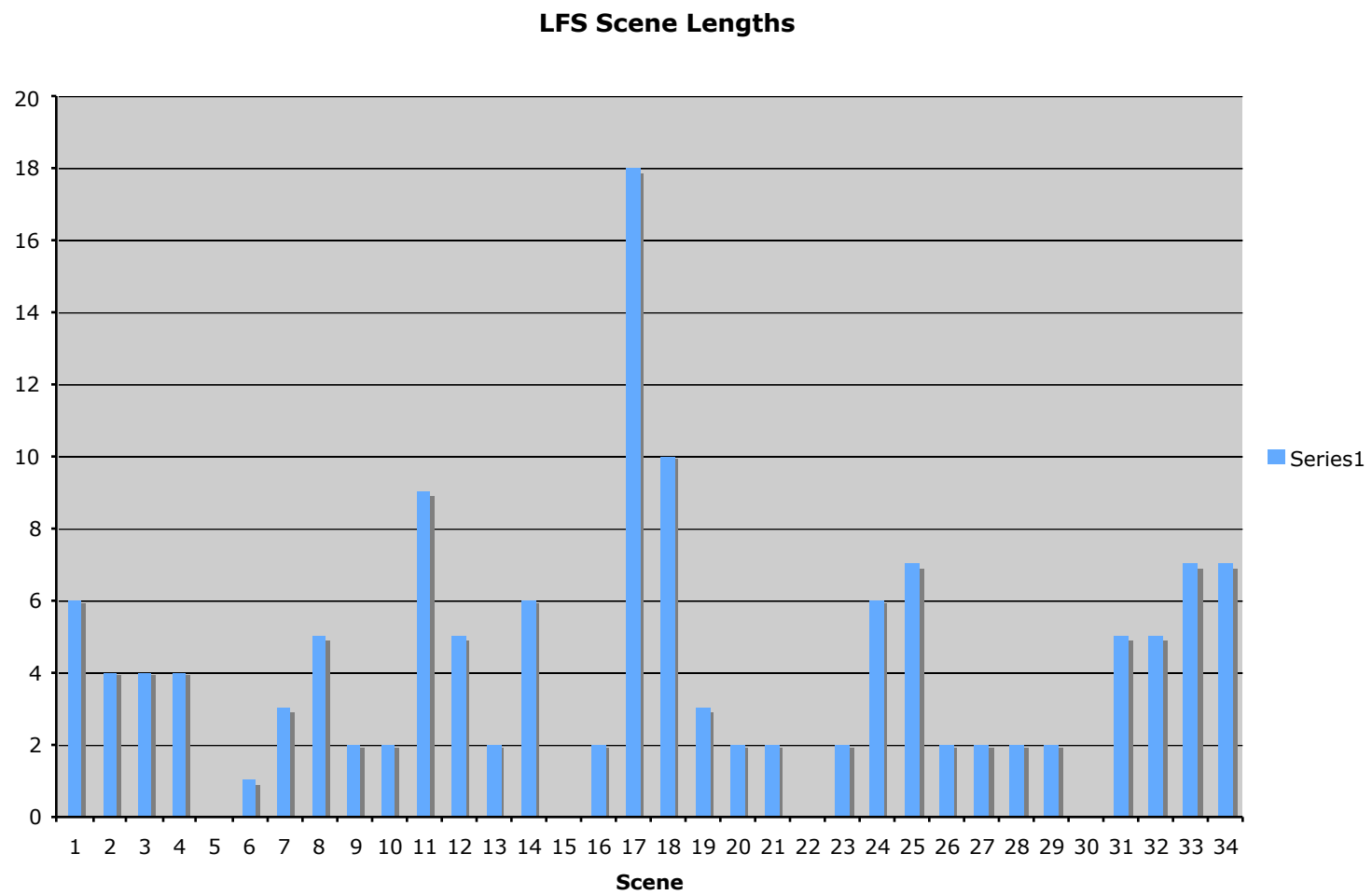
TURNING POINT #4:

NEW STASIS – Trissotin is exposed as a gold-digger and ejected from the salon, Clitandre and Henriette are married, and Martine has been rehired.

PART SIX: CHARACTER/SCENE BREAKDOWN & LENGTHS

ACT	SCENE	PAGES	CHARACTERS
1	1	6	Armande, Henriette
	2	4	Armande, Henriette, Clitandre
	3	4	Clitandre, Henriette
	4	4	Clitandre, Bélise
2	1	1	Ariste
	2	3	Chrysale, Ariste
	3	5	Chrysale, Ariste, Bélise
	4	2	Chrysale, Ariste
	5	2	Chrysale, Martine
	6	9	Chrysale, Martine, Philaminte, Bélise
	7	5	Chrysale, Philaminte, Bélise
	8	2	Chrysale, Philaminte
	9	6	Chrysale, Ariste
3	1	2	Philaminte, Armande, Bélise, Trissotin, Lépine
	2	18	Philaminte, Armande, Bélise, Trissotin, Lépine, Henriette
	3	10	Philaminte, Armande, Bélise, Trissotin, Lépine, Henriette, Vadius
	4	3	Philaminte, Armande, Bélise, Trissotin, Henriette
	5	2	Armande, Henriette
	6	2	Armande, Henriette, Chrysale, Ariste, Clitandre
4	1	2	Philaminte, Armande
	2	6	Philaminte, Armande, Clitandre
	3	7	Philaminte, Armande, Clitandre, Trissotin
	4	2	Philaminte, Armande, Clitandre, Trissotin, Julien
	5	2	Armande, Clitandre
	6	2	Clitandre, Chrysale, Ariste, Henriette
	7	2	Clitandre, Henriette
5	1	5	Henriette, Trissotin
	2	5	Henriette, Chrysale, Clitandre, Martine
	3	7	Henriette, Chrysale, Clitandre, Martine, Philaminte, Bélise, Armande, Trissotin, Notary
	4	7	Henriette, Chrysale, Clitandre, Martine, Philaminte, Bélise, Armande, Trissotin, Notary, Ariste

Table 2.1
Scene Lengths in pages in *The Learned Ladies*



CHAPTER THREE – Production Journal

Friday, April 27, 2007

I had my first design meeting with Stephania today (and my first design meeting of the process as well). It was fairly informal, we talked about the play (obviously), what we thought it was about, who these characters are, and what kind of space they would inhabit. She also had a rough sketch/pastel drawing, which represents a salon the women may have run in the seventeenth century.

We both thought a “salon” space is the best place to start, but we’d like to explore potentially adding some levels (maybe a set of stairs or a rise) to prevent the space from being so flat. The initial drawing does have these beautiful curtains hanging from the ceiling, which I like because they add an interesting vertical element to the space.

The meeting lasted about 45 minutes, and since it will be the only time we will be able to meet before September, Stephania said she would send more sketches/research to me via email during the summer break. It’s great to have that meeting “out of the way” (as it were). Now that the set is one step forward (albeit a small one) I feel that I can start to visualize the production.

Tuesday, May 8, 2007

Carmen (the costume designer) and I met for a beer and a chat this afternoon (and what a lovely afternoon it was to sit on a patio, have a drink, and talk about Molière). Like the meeting I had with Stephania it was informal, as we mostly just chatted about the world of the play.

Coming in to the meeting I was resisting the thought about going too “period” with the costumes, but at the same time I didn’t want to modernize them either. The best I could describe it was “atemporal” – the sort of universe where, if we’re clever about it, we could get away with the characters having cell phones while at the same time addressing each other as “sir” and “madam” (not that we’ll have cell phones. Although...). Carmen really wants to keep the period shape for the costumes, so she suggested period lines and shapes with modern colours and fabrics, to keep that seventeenth century aesthetic, but it adds a little twist to it. This, I think, is a great idea, and builds on some of the ideas Stephania and I have emailed back and forth about since our meeting last week (she’s thinking about the possibility of a projection screen on stage... maybe over the fireplace in place of a painting).

As with Stephania, this will be the only chance Carmen and I have to meet until the fall, but she will attempt to send a sketch or two my way via email.

Thursday, September 13, 2007

Today was my first post-summer design meeting with Carmen, and I was not nearly as prepared as I could have/should have been, having not read the script in about a month, and then falling asleep last night when I attempted to read it.

The meeting, then, was more productive than my preparedness should have allowed it to be, since Carmen had a few sketches and fabric samples (not actual samples of fabrics she wants to use, but just some options). We've decided against fabrics that are too modern – denim was a possibility for a (very) brief while – and instead are leaning toward something more classic and elegant, like silk or a reasonable facsimile (but not something that's going to be too “swishy” on stage). My main comment at the meeting was that I didn't want the costumes to look too flat and monochromatic, since her idea is to dress each character in a colour that best represents them. But she was ready for me, wanting to silk screen the dresses and coats. We're not sure what form the patterns (or whatever) to be screened will be, but we both agreed there should be a definite stylistic difference in what the “learned” ladies have screened on their clothes versus what the others have.

Friday, September 28, 2007

Our post-summer meeting was a bit later than I wanted it to be, but Stephania and I finally managed to catch each other this afternoon, after playing phone and email tag for about a month. She had a pile of research (likely more than I have done at this point), as well as a brand new sketch... with no stairs or levels of any kind. I really want some levels (or so I've told myself), because I want the variety of playing spaces and pictures, but her argument – a very sound one – was that a space such as a *salon* wouldn't have any sort of rise or staircase. I countered with “yes, but I want some levels” (not as sound, I admit).

We may be able to reach a compromise, though, since in her research the importance and value of books came up again and again, so why not, when covering the stage with books – as many as props and budget will allow – not make some of the stacks “interactive” in the sense that the actors could climb on them, hide behind them, sit on them, whatever. This goes nicely with the “playground” metaphor that has been rattling around in my head when it's not filled with *Death & Taxes*.

I'm still not completely sold on the idea of no levels, but Stephania is going to come up with another sketch or two so I can see the possibilities of using the piles of books instead. In other news, we're going full-steam ahead on the projection screen as painting over the fire, and we'll have the actors (in character) change the artwork throughout the play. It's another way for Philaminte and Chrysale to fight over the space, I think, and while also working within the playground theme, also works to set the play in a more atemporal world (it's no cell phone, but I'll take it).

Thursday, October 4, 2007

Today was audition day. While I wanted to leave myself as open as possible going in (“leave yourself open to be surprised,” Stephen Heatley advised me), when the day began I had some definite ideas of who I wanted to use, but not necessarily *where* I wanted to use them. Still, I resisted last night’s urge to write up a potential “cast list,” were I not able to hold auditions (I did one in my head though; sort of). What I wanted to see was actors who were ready to play – I was hoping for big choices and big commitment, and if they came in with neither than I would give them the “go big” direction and see what they did with it. Being familiar with the casting pool I had an idea of who would deliver, but still, I left myself open.

And after seeing the auditions, most of my suspicions – both good and bad – were confirmed, although there was a surprise or two. Not surprisingly, however, the final-year students were much more prepared and engaged than the second-years, who all seemed to stand in a 3/4 cheat position, reading the sides, while not really engaging with each other or the text. There were a couple of exceptions, though. Both Maryanne and Becky seemed more comfortable than the rest of their classmates, and when they read with some final year students near the end of the morning, their inhibitions were greatly diminished (when scheduling the auditions my thinking had been to arrange the pairs/groups as I may see them on stage, and barring that keep classmates together because I thought they would be more comfortable. Maybe not the best strategy).

Still, I was impressed with what a lot of the actors brought to the auditions. Most of the final year students – especially Maura, Kate, and Courtney – came ready and willing to play (the three of them played one scene so over the top that at one point two of them were crawling on the floor while the third was writhing in her chair), and my intuition re: casting of Philaminte, Chrysale, Clitandre, and Trissotin was confirmed, but there are intriguing possibilities for a number of roles, especially Henriette. I read Courtney for the part on a bit of a whim, since one of my Clitandre’s needed a scene partner, but she really nailed it. She was the only one of the women who read for the role who understood that that character is always the smartest person in the room. I had her in mind for either Bélise or maybe Martine (the type of parts she generally gets; at least, the type I’ve seen her play), but now I really want her for the ingénue.

I wish I had more parts – especially for the women – as there are, unfortunately, some great actors I’m not going to get to work with (as much as I love Sarah, for example, there just isn’t a part for her in the show).

Admittedly, I’m a bit anxious about the casting meeting next week. I know I won’t get my first choice for each part, but I’m worried because the actors I really want are also (by coincidence) very good singers, and since *Old Goriot* is a musical.... But, we shall see.

Tuesday, October 9, 2007

I am happy to report there were no tears and very little blood at the casting meeting this afternoon. I got my first choice for nine of the play's thirteen parts (hooray!), and even my "second" choices are by no means inferior, just different (in one case intriguingly different, and the more I think about it, the more I like this casting to my potential casting). I am a bit disappointed, though, that I have to double some of the parts. While it was always a back-up plan, I was hoping I'd be able to avoid doubling, since I feel it makes the play's universe smaller. But *Old Goriot* needed more actors than originally thought (and at that is still going to have to move outside the BFA to find men), and on the bright side, this will give the actors playing Vadius/Notary and Lépine/Julien more to do, and I'll certainly get over it. I am going to pout about it this weekend, however.

But: I have a cast. It all seems so real.

Thursday, November 22, 2007

A busy day with three meetings (and six hours of class). First, Stephania and I hammered out some final details re: props and the stacks of books. I'm over the set's lack of levels (what's a six-inch rise upstage really give me anyway?), especially after seeing some new drawings of the books. They're going to be a bit cartoonish in their size, but given the style that I hope the play has, they should work really well. Plus, a couple of them will act as great obstacles for the actors (especially the women in their dresses).

Next up was Michelle Ha, my stage manager. Michelle worked as LX operator for *The Maids* last year, and while I remember her being on top of things for that show, she seems really on top of things for *Learned Ladies*. So many questions I was not prepared to answer, but really should have been able to (such as "what do you want to do on the first day?" and "do you know how much time you're going to spend around the table? When do you want the floor taped?"). If she's half this prepared in rehearsals it will be a very smooth process.

Finally, I had a meeting with Carmen wherein final costume renderings were approved. She also had a mock-up of one of the dresses on a mannequin, which looked great, though a tad patchy and peasanty (which they won't be). There will be couple of minor colour tweaks to the costumes (she had Chrysale in green, but I think he'd be better served in blue so as to contrast with Philaminte's pink), as well as some small changes to the servants (Martine's costume will have a silk screened element "imposed" on her by the ladies, either on her cap or apron), but overall, it looks fantastic. Having Carmen design the costumes was the best decision I have made thus far on the show.

Tomorrow I'm off to Ottawa to see the NAC/Pleiades Theatre co-production of *Dying to be Sick*, a new tradaptation of *Le Malade imaginaire*; then it's back here for the home stretch...

Saturday, November 24, 2007

So I make the trip all the way to Ottawa so I can see *Dying to be Sick*, which I thought would be a good thing to do because a) it's a Molière play in translation which, by the look of the press material will be stylistically similar to what I want to do with *Learned Ladies*; and b) I get to take a quick little trip/vacation and see my girlfriend before I move into rehearsals. Unfortunately, the play was a mess.

When the play opened and the actor playing Argan started speaking, I had one of those "oh no, I am going to *hate* this" moments, but I couldn't quite put my finger on what prompted such an immediate and visceral reaction. I like the play's stylistic choices, which were similar to what we're going to make: a classic shape for the costumes with a contemporary twist (like leggings on the female lead, as well as brighter, more modern colours and some nice texture), and there was a great theatricality to it – especially their coordination of sound and lights during the transitions, and an inspired costume for the doctor. A great use of costumes all around actually, they really emphasized the actors' shapes, drawing attention to different body types, and helping delineate the characters that were doubled.

There was, however, no music to the language (I can't, writing this three days later, remember if the play was in verse, but I have a feeling it wasn't, because their treatment of the verse was one of the most interesting elements for me). It just hung there without any life. Maybe (likely) it was the translation, but the actors made no attempt to get behind the words (after three weeks playing in Toronto and two more in Ottawa, they must all have realized they are in a terrible, terrible play). I've been debating with myself about how much I want to emphasize the verse in *Learned Ladies*, and I'm still not sure. As evidenced by this show, there needs to be some life in the text, and the rhyme will definitely help with that. But at the same time I don't want to lull the audience into a monotonous AA BB CC DD rhyme pattern.

Besides the poor use of language, there weren't any stakes. At all. Comedy works because everything the characters want is REALLY IMPORTANT. Why should we care if they don't? In a play where a man desperately needs a cure because he thinks he is dying while his wife is cheating on him and hoping he will croak, you would think someone's stakes would be high. You'd be wrong.

So what did I learn? The stakes for all the characters have to be HUGE, and I need to emphasize the verse, I think.

Oh: and I should have left at intermission.

Monday, November 26, 2007

I spent a lot of time thinking about entrances and exits today (brought on, I think by thinking back to the entrances in *Dying to be Sick*, which I found a bit dull. The entrances and exits were dull, that is. Well, the whole play was). Because of the way the set is designed the majority of the entrances will come from upstage right and left (we've

pushed it downstage quite a bit so a great deal of the playing space is on the apron, eliminating some entrances; and the fireplace upstage means there isn't an upstage centre entrance). Sightlines may also be a problem because of the shape of the house.

And related to this, I was also thinking about the first time we see some of the characters. What are the impressions that I want the audience to have the first time they meet the characters (specifically Philaminte, Chrysale, and Trissotin), and how do I want to introduce them? Trissotin enters between Acts 2 and 3, so I have the chance to do something theatrical with his entrance (I'd love to fly him in at the end of the scene change, but I'm not sure if it will be possible, or too much), but Philaminte and Chrysale enter in the middle of the action in Act 2. I think their first entrances should be a mini event of sorts, but I'm not sure how just yet.

Wednesday, November 28, 2007

I haven't had much time to work or think about the show, as I've been working on the Robert Lepage seminar that is to be presented tomorrow. My focus is split and while it's a bit frustrating, my research is helping to inform how I want to work on *Learned Ladies* (especially Lepage's ideas around theatre as "sport" and theatre as a vertical medium – which makes me want to fly Trissotin in all the more – and his theory on rehearsals as an environment to play is exactly what I hope to achieve in my rehearsals). I have been able to do a bit of rehearsal planning (for the first two days, at least). I know I want to do a read and surprise run (to get the actors thinking physically) on the first day, as well as play some games on days one and two, but after that I'm not sure. When and how much time (if any) I spend around the table are questions I'm still debating.

Saturday, December 1, 2007

In between some final pre-rehearsal reading, scene changes came up (brought on, I'm fairly certain, by an article I read on the three-hundredth anniversary of the play which briefly described seventeenth century scenographic elements). How do I want to deal with the transitions between the acts? We'll be using the curtain at the top and tail of the show, as well as at intermission, but what do I want to between Acts 1/2, 2/3, and 4/5? How theatrical can I get away with making them? The idea of flying in Trissotin seems that it just won't go away, and maybe using the traps to bring characters in and out could be fun in a theatrical way as well.

Sunday, December 2

I finished the remainder of my pre-rehearsal prep, and also managed to get some reading done as well (including a book and an interesting article on Molière's *commedia* influences). I'm still debating how soon I want to get the actors on their feet (not counting the surprise run I am still planning on doing after lunch on day one). I think we will do some table work on days two and three, but that will likely be broken up by some games (since if I have to sit around a table for eight hours straight I know I'll be bored, so I can't imagine how the actors will feel). This will all depend, though, on how the actors

respond to the games on day one and the first part of day two. I'm not going to waste time and energy making them play if they're entirely uninterested, but I'm confident that they'll want to play (because really, who doesn't love a good ball game?).

Monday, December 3, 2007

The first day of rehearsal went very well – it was great to finally hear the play (I'd read sections of it aloud to myself and had also heard small sections in auditions, but I was thrilled to finally really *hear* the play, especially with the actual voices), as I made a few discoveries, and heard some things I hadn't picked up on when I read it. Most notably, the Armande/Clitandre/Henriette love triangle is more prominent than I first thought (I don't know if I had ever really thought of it as a love triangle before today – I had previously used the term facetiously – but now I'm convinced there is more in the relationship between the three than I had originally given the play credit for). What was also interesting was how the actors handled the verse, and which of those in the cast chose (consciously or not) to emphasize the rhyming couplets and those who didn't. It remains to be seen whether they will become more comfortable with the couplets as the rehearsals continue, or if language work is something I will have to dedicate a good deal of time to.

Hearing the play also changed my perception on some of its language. I've been compiling a glossary, which I thought was both extensive and complete, but during the read I realized that none of those things were true. I compiled a list of at least thirty additional words and phrases. They're words I thought I knew, but they either have archaic meanings (like "meet") or have more obscure (at least for me) secondary definitions (such as "grossly").

The run in the afternoon went surprisingly well. The actors used the space more effectively than I thought they would, and although as a group they have the tendency to get themselves into a straight-line at centre stage, their instincts led to some nice stage pictures and got my (as well as their) imagination firing for when we get on our feet (which, based on today's work and the positive response to the games we played, will probably be Wednesday afternoon).

Tuesday, December 4, 2007

I've decided to split the next two days between table work and more physical work/games, as I don't feel quite ready to get the actors up yet, but at the same time I don't want to spend too many continuous hours sitting at the table. We got through – reading and then discussing any questions and comments we may have had – the first three acts. I didn't want to impose too many of my ideas and impressions of the play on the actors yet, so I let them lead the discussions, only really commenting when I was asked a question or if a piece of research I had done was particularly relevant to the discussion (such as the article "Names in Molière's *Les Femmes savantes*" when one of the actors asked if there was any relevance to the fact that some of the names in the play – Henriette, for example – are actual French names, while others – most prominently

Trissotin – are invented by Molière). I decided to take this tactic to give the actors more of a sense of ownership over the piece, and I'm pleased with the results. For the most part the discourse was on-topic, we laughed, and the actors were all very well prepared (and if they weren't they did an excellent job at hiding it).

The cast is also getting more involved in the games, as the grumbling (ie. "I'm having bad memories of high school gym class") heard Monday and this morning all disappeared when we played "GO" (a game where the group stands in a circle, tossing a ball to someone in the centre. At any time someone from the circle can yell "go," and then switch places with the centre player. The goal is to keep the ball in the air and have the transition between the two players be as seamless as possible) after we got back from lunch.

The goal for tomorrow is to finish the discussion started today in the morning, and then spend the afternoon with a physical activity, before getting up on our feet on Thursday morning. What that afternoon activity is going to be, I'm not sure yet. I may have them run it again, trying to incorporate the work we've done the two days previous, but I'm more inclined to go with something different. I'll see what I can think up.

Wednesday, December 5, 2007

We finished the table work on Acts 4 and 5 in the morning, with maybe more detail than yesterday (actors came today not only with questions about their own scenes, but also for scenes in which they don't appear). I talked more today than I did yesterday, which is probably due to my excitement over getting to get up and play on our feet. The actors still led the majority of the discussion, and the talk was evenly distributed among the cast. Even the actors with a bit less to do – Jeff, Michael, and Yoshie – contributed a great deal.

The reading raised some fairly significant questions for me, however: first, I have no idea what is happening in Act 4, Scene 5. Taking place immediately after Vadius' letter denouncing Trissotin arrives, the scene has Armande pledging to Clitandre to do all she can to help his endeavor. Afterwards, however, Armande barely speaks (she may have three or four more lines, tops), and when she does, it is not to help Clitandre in any way. So is Armande being sarcastic? It seems like a very uninteresting choice, as it keeps Armande in the exact place she began the play, and it would just be another snarky scene between Clitandre and his former girlfriend. This is probably going to be the most difficult scene of the play. Second, I'm now debating making a small cut on page 280/281 (Act 4, Scene 3) when Clitandre rants about poets undeserving to be on the payroll of the state. I'm still thinking about flashing some photos up on the projection screen during this bit (much like Stephen Colbert does on his "The Word" segment on *The Colbert Report*), but I'm still thinking it over.

In the afternoon, instead of another run, I decided to mix things up a bit. I randomly assigned the actors someone else's role (so for example, Gord played Martine, Yoshie played Clitandre, and Jeff played Henriette), and sitting in a circle, we read the play

again, with the option of moving into the circle and using the space. It's something I'd never done before, and I was hoping it would allow the actors to hear things they may not have picked up on when reading the play aloud or to themselves. We didn't have much time to talk about it afterwards, but I'll make sure tomorrow to see if a) it was successful; and b) what they thought of the exercise. I thought it was a lot of fun. While some of it was a bit (and some of it was way) over the top (the guys who had played women in *Midsummer* and then had female roles here were able to get right back into the swing of things), it was great to hear another voice playing the parts, especially with regard to the couplets. Courtney hadn't been overly emphasizing them during the reads, and neither did Jeff during this run, so I'm led to believe the character's rhymes are less prominent than those of the others.

We also had the second production meeting today, and things are really moving along. The set is nicely taking shape after a tweak or two (mostly around placement of furniture and the stacks of books, as well as the size of the fireplace and the size and shape of the projection screen and its frame). We should be able to get at least one of the stacks in front of a trap – to have the characters magically appear from behind them, especially during the scenes where characters are to “enter the room quietly and listen” – and we've added a trunk of books. Just more stuff to get in their way.

Thursday, December 6, 2007

The energy was much different in rehearsal today than it's been for the past three days, as it's the first time the whole cast wasn't called for a rehearsal, we didn't play any games (with only up to three actors in any given scene we really didn't have critical mass), and it was the first day the actors got up on their feet. That being said, I think good progress is being made. I'm trying not to try and fall into my usual pattern of trying to want results too quickly, and am instead trying to stay more “big picture” with the scenes: focusing primarily on story, stakes and objectives, obstacles, and triggers (the term I'm using to describe major story beats and shifts within the scenes), as well as capture the energy of the scene. I'm not worrying too much about the intricacies of the text (meter, rhythm, couplets) at this point, but I am giving small notes on any habits I notice forming throughout the various runs through the scenes. We're roughing out a pseudo-blocking for each of the scenes so when we do a stumble-through at the end of next week the actors have something to hold on to. We made it to the end of Act 1, which was where I wanted to be, which means that thus far I have been able to stay on schedule. So score one point for me, I guess.

I am, as I anticipated, having some trouble with entrances. Today, it was Clitandre's first appearance that was a bit frustrating, as all the different options we played with either pulled too much focus from the Armande/Henriette scene that precedes it, or it didn't have any impact at all. But, since I'm trying not to solve all the problems at this point (as I am naturally inclined to do), I left it alone (but left myself a large note on my script reading: “FIX THIS!!!”

Being on their feet really changed the perceptions some of the actors had of the scenes. Courtney and Aslam were convinced, for example, that Henriette and Clitandre aren't really in love; that their relationship is based much more on convenience – for Henriette, the marriage would be a way for her to get out of the house, and Clitandre has a method of exacting a sort of revenge on Armande for the way she treated him (I completely disagreed with this interpretation – the play doesn't work if the two aren't in love. Why go through all the hassle just for spite? – but I didn't want to mention it during the table work, for fear of them clamming up). When we put the two into space, however, their perception of the scene completely changed. Score one for true love over cynicism, I suppose.

Also, the actors at rehearsal today said they enjoyed yesterday's "mixed-up" run, because, as I had hoped, it forced them to really listen to what their character says, and they each heard things they hadn't before. Score another one for me.

Friday, December 7, 2007

We picked up where we left off yesterday, starting around the table with a short read and discussion of the scene and then moving onto our feet. And like yesterday we were able to stay on schedule (two days in a row... something must be wrong with me), working through Act 2, Scenes 1-6. Unlike yesterday, however, there was some actor resistance to the "let's just put a rough blocking in place and not set anything approach" that the rehearsals have been taking. Maybe "resistance" is the wrong word, but there are definitely two camps in the room: those who appreciate the freedom the process is giving them to play and experiment, and those who seem a little frustrated that there's been no blocking "set" for them. And while I am easily able (and tried) to set blocking for one actor while telling another to do what he or she feels like, invariably the actor with freedom will keep experimenting, while the other is left looking lost. It is not a major obstacle as of yet (there haven't been any fistfights or temper tantrums), but I may need to take a more balanced approach when working scenes with actors from the different camps (although, I'm going to hold out as long as I can, since I prefer working in the more freeform style, and there have been moments of incredible creativity from the actors thus far, and I'd like to encourage more of that).

All of the actors, however, are starting to use the set more. While yesterday it took a suggestion from me to prompt someone on to one of the stacks to grab a book or to use the remote control for the projection screen, today they took it upon themselves to find new ways to interact with the space.

I ran into Stephen Heatley on the lunch break, and his question on what we'll be doing with the period bows/greetings got me thinking. To this point, the actors have been improvising greetings (the men have been shaking hands, or in the case of Chrysale/Ariste, hugging; while the women have been curtseying), but Stephen's suggestion of finding something that fits in-between a modern and period greeting (much like the set and costumes designs) has me thinking. What it may be I'm not sure yet, however.

Also, now that we're into more structured scene-by-scene rehearsals, there are some actors I won't see now for days at a time (especially Yoshie, Jeff, and Michael), so I'm trying to make an extra effort to ensure they feel comfortable in their scenes before moving on. I know it can be difficult to remain focused when you're only called every three or four days for an hour or two at a time to rehearse a six-minute scene, but I'm hoping they can stay hungry for rehearsal time. Today, Yoshie was disappointed that she wouldn't be needed again until we rehearse Act 5 (which will likely be Wednesday). I'm taking that as a good sign.

Sunday, December 9, 2007

We started work on Act 3 today, and my suspicions going into the day were confirmed: this is going to be the most difficult section of the production to stage, for two reasons: first, there is the traffic issue. While seven actors on stage isn't really that many, I seemed to have boxed myself (and my actors) in a little bit with the placement of the furniture, having moved the two upstage arm chairs (which until this point had been living on either side of the fireplace) between the chaise and the bench. This has made it very difficult for the actors to move around the furniture without making a long (and somewhat unnatural) cross stage right. The first few passes through the scene were very static because of this problem. Also proving difficult is the timing. Getting all the characters where (I think) they need to be for each of the jokes in the scene is proving headache inducing, and the traffic issue really isn't helping very much. There are moments when I want the three Learned Ladies together, others where I think they should be apart, and some places where I'd like to throw focus onto Henriette. Getting everyone where I want them when I want them there, however, is proving to be very challenging (though, I figured it would be). I think I may have too much going on right now, and if the blocking were simplified, that may help out.

Today was also the first day that an actor initiated using the projection screen "remote" without my suggesting it. I'm not at all sure of the placement of these little bits of activity yet, but I am glad that they're starting to feel comfortable enough to play with the set elements we have. The books are also being used more and more (and in more and more creative ways – as weapons and shields, to sit on, to hide behind while pretending to be reading) which I am happy to see.

I have come to realize that these eight-hour days are playing havoc with my brain, and that by about 4:30/5:00 pm, my brain has turned to mush. I don't consider myself a morning person, but the best work done thus far in the rehearsal period has all taken place in the morning, with the later day rehearsing feeling very laboured, especially the last hour to hour-and-a-half of each day. I think I may move to shorter rehearsal days – either starting at 11:00 or ending at 5:00 – to see if this helps. While the idea of an extra half-hour to sleep is appealing, I'm more likely to end early, since the mornings have been so productive. And while I don't like losing the rehearsal time, why keep everyone there if we aren't getting any work done anyway?

Finally, the rehearsal hall was FREEZING cold this morning, likely because we hadn't been in there for a couple of days, so the heat was off for quite a while. This really affected the work we were able to do, especially in the morning, since actors, stage management, and myself were all wearing coats, gloves, scarves, and hats. To make things worse, there was no sun today, so the usually warm (and not to mention pleasant) sunlight from the DSS windows wasn't there to help us. Things warmed up slightly by mid-day, however.

Monday, December 10, 2007

A great deal of time was spent on Act 3, Scene 2 today, picking up where we left off yesterday, with some of the same problems we had yesterday surrounding the furniture, which I think is still in the way. Half-way through the scene I debated moving it somewhere else, but decided against it so as not to throw the actors off (for the record, they haven't been complaining about it at all, and whenever I bring it up they say that they can "make it work," so I will likely see what happens when we stumble through the whole play on Friday). I would like to find a place mid-Act to move the chairs, but there doesn't seem to be anywhere that doesn't seem contrived (I wanted to bring LÉPINE in to make the switch, but after the chairs are finished being used the scenes are all too intimate to have the butler running around moving furniture). Something else to watch for on Friday afternoon, I think.

Stephen Heatley came into rehearsal today and made two keen observations. First: what is Henriette up to during these long scenes (Act 3, Scenes 2, 3, 4) when she is sitting around the salon but not doing much of anything? The questions I need to ask myself, I think, are how much (if any) focus should she pull? and what do these scenes need to set up for later in the play? There is some comedic potential in her reactions to Trissotin's action (and to her credit, Courtney is finding it, although it's tricky since at the moment she is sitting upstage and is blocked by other actors for a good portion of the scene), as well as the comedic reversal which comes when it is announced that she is to marry him. There should be some places to give the character some false exits, and when we come back to the scene I'd like her to play the "keep trying to sneak out of the room but are consistently being caught by your mother" game, which should get her moving and into better stage positions. At the very least, it's worth a try.

Stephen also brought up that there is very little happening downstage left, and that this is likely due to the lack of furniture there. I have toyed with placing the writing desk there (which at this point is scheduled to be moved on stage in Act 5 for the NOTARY to use), but it would need to be placed either in front of the proscenium line, which would limit my use of the curtain, or just behind the proscenium, but then the furniture – desk, bench, chaise – forms a line across the centre of the stage which isn't aesthetically appealing. It's not an insurmountable problem by any stretch (the desk could easily be brought on and off by a crew member), but it will require a bit more thinking.

And for the first time in the rehearsal process we seemed to be moving away from the scene/story/triggers/stakes approach that we had been taking thus far in the rehearsal

process, and got into much more detail and finicky blocking oriented work. I'm not sure why this is, but tomorrow I hope to steer discussion back this way, since it is a process that has been working quite well for us so far.

Also, I keep forgetting about some of the French pronunciations. In my pass through the script looking for French words/phrases I missed a few – Vaugelas, popping up on a few occasions, being the most glaring – and need to get this done, as there's no continuity among how the actors are pronouncing these words.

Tuesday, December 11, 2007

We hit what might be the trickiest scene in the play thus far today: Act 3, Scene 5, which is a very short moment (only 7 lines) between Armande and Henriette. The scene, I think, is a victory dance of sorts for the older sister, since she and Henriette are now alone in the room after their mother announces the marriage. But like we're learning with all of Armande's scenes, there seems to be a lot more going on than the length of the scene would indicate. The problem we've been running into revolves around Armande's level of sincerity. We hit the same problem later in the day when we rehearsed Act 4, Scene 5, another short scene with Armande (this time with Clitandre). In 4.5 Armande pledges to help her former lover and her sister, however, she does nothing to help them for the rest of the play (and only has 3 or 4 more lines, anyway). Trying to piece together Armande's motivations in these two scenes was frustrating (and I imagine may continue to be). I don't know if I'm missing something, or if it's just a fault of the play's dramaturgy (normally I'd go with the former, but in this instance I'm not so sure).

The whole of Act 4, I think, is going to be challenge. It seems that the action stops for a few scenes in order for Molière to air his personal views. The scenes where Clitandre/Armande and Clitandre/Trissotin face off don't add any forward momentum to the play, seeming like attacks on the playwright's contemporaries. The worst of these moments come on pages 280-281, when Clitandre defends the Court and lambastes Trissotin's pension-less friends. I'm debating cutting the section (though I'd rather not), but I'm going to hold off on that decision, since I find making cuts an easy out for sections one doesn't understand. In this case, however, I feel that I understand what the playwright was going for; I just don't find the section relevant. Act 4 will be a bigger challenge than Act 3, I believe, because of the danger of the play sagging just after intermission.

We got our mock book units today, and already the actors are using them more (they stayed away from the black rehearsal blocks we were using previously like they were infected with Ebola, but I couldn't get them off the new units when they were first placed). We played with their placement a bit and made them larger than Stephania had intended, but they look great and give the actors another place to play, so I'm very happy with them,

I am quickly discovering, however, that I don't think the chaise we are going to have will be long enough. The rehearsal chaise we were given is a foot longer than the show

chaise, and all four women (Philaminte, BÉLISE, Armande, Henriette) barely fit on it, squeezed tightly together, in jeans. I'm not sure how I'll fit all four on there in their costumes. I could change the blocking for the scene, but I like the comedic potential of having them in such close quarters during the salon scene.

Wednesday, December 12, 2007

These little scenes are going to kill me.

We went back a bit first thing today so we could look at Act 4, Scenes 4-7 with fresh morning energy. Still, we hit the same obstacles we faced yesterday: what is going on with Armande? What does the character want? Does she ever say what she is actually thinking? Does her thinking change from scene to scene? Moment to moment? To her credit, Maryanne is coming to rehearsals very well prepared and ready to try anything, but nothing either of us has come up with has felt right yet. I'm nowhere near panic mode, since there is a lot of time to figure out what is going on, but in a rehearsal process that has been free of major problems thus far, to hit this roadblock has been frustrating.

I'm also beginning to realize the importance of pace in the final scenes of Act 4. The Act ends with four scenes of two pages or less, with characters constantly coming in and out of the room. The build up to the play's climax needs urgency, and while the actors didn't quite get that at today's rehearsal, I'm sure they can get there.

We had our third (and final pre-Christmas) production meeting at lunch today, where I was dismayed to learn that the chaise I think is too short is the chaise we are going to have, since not only has the fabric used to cover the furniture already been bought, but the chaise had already been covered (I was warned by Craig Holzschuh that once the "UBC machine" starts rolling there's no stopping it, and this was my first demonstration of it). I'm a bit disappointed, since I really like the length of the rehearsal chaise, but it's not the end of the world. I do question why they gave us a longer one for rehearsal than we would end up having (and didn't tell us it was longer, lucky for me my stage manager is on the ball and had the foresight to ask), but what can you do? I was able – against some protest from props – to get the rehearsal chaise swapped out for the real one for the rest of rehearsals, which will allow us to solve the problem sooner, rather than tech weekend.

I am a little concerned, however, that I have yet to hear from my sound designer. It took a while to track down contact info for him (and at that, I was only able to get an email address), and he hasn't responded to my email. I was hoping to have a meeting with him before we went away for the break, but it's looking more and more like that isn't going to happen.

Thursday, December 13, 2007

Today was a fairly uneventful day. We finished our first work-through of the play early enough that we had time to go back and re-look at the beginning of Act 3 (Scenes 1-4).

The Act 5 work happened much more quickly than I had anticipated. Because of the amount of people on stage (10 actors in Act 5, Scene 3, and all 11 company members in Scene 4) I decided to take a bit of a different approach to the work through of these scenes than I had previously taken. Before I had let the actors experiment and improvise most of the blocking until we found something that worked. But with the amount of traffic on stage, I decided to be a bit more proactive in helping shape the scene. The change in rehearsal techniques didn't seem to affect the actors at all (they seemed to embrace it – a lot of them like being told what to do), and we were able to zip through the scene at a good clip. At first I was concerned that I was glossing over the scenes' story/stakes/etc., but I made sure after the blocking was taken care of to go back and put the work into the scene. It all went much smoother than I imagined.

With our extra time, we had the opportunity to go back and look at the top of Act 3 again. My goal was not to make major changes, but just to see how what is the most complex scene in the play held up after a few days away from it. Happily, it worked quite well. There were a few moments of confusion, but some of those led to more interesting choices (particularly involving Trissotin's movements), and the actors are gaining more confidence in the scene. When we come back from the break I will try to find as many opportunities to run the scene as possible, as I would like to instill as much confidence in the actors as possible.

I did receive a bit of unhappy news today. Carmen told me that we won't be able to get the women's corsets for the run tomorrow, because the costume shop thinks it will be too much work to find, pull, and size all the women for what amounts to two hours of rehearsal time. I probably could have pushed a bit harder for it, but this is not a fight that I'm willing or wanting to pick at this point, so I decided to just let it lay. I did make it very clear that having the pieces for the first day after the break is absolutely essential. We'll see what happens.

Friday, December 14, 2007

I decided when we started two weeks ago that I wanted to end this first part of the rehearsal process with a sort of stumble through. I thought it would give the actors (as well as myself) a good handle on where we are, and I also find runs psychologically helpful, as they give a sense of achievement to everyone involved. I'm glad we were able to get there, because it made me feel good about what we've done, and also taught me a lot.

First, I really heard the verse in a lot of the play, in many instances for the first time. My approach to the couplets coming in to the process was that I would emphasize in some places, and leave it be in others. Now, however, I want to draw focus to the rhyme as much as possible. The world and style of the play (and sense of play) I am trying to achieve are so much clearer when the verse is being emphasized, and I would be an idiot to ignore it.

I also got a great sense of where the play is working and which sections are still muddy. As I suspected, the first three scenes of Act 4 drag as the dramatic action pauses for about 20 minutes, while Act 5 moves along much better than I had anticipated. Also helpful was to see all of my blocking at once, and to notice that the chaise is used an awful lot (the actors love to lounge on it), the writing desk and downstage right are underused (partly because I didn't place the writing desk until we began rehearsing Act 4), and I mirror some blocking in a few instances – in some places I like the callback, in others it just looks sloppy – and I still think the chairs are in the way in Act 3.

Finally, the stumble through gave me a great sense of where the actors are. I continue to be impressed with Maryanne and Jeff, and I'm also very happy with the work Maura, Courtney, Nick, and Aslam have put in. The run did show me, though, that Shaun seems to be a bit behind the others. He seems to have held on to less of the work we have done than the rest of the cast. I'm wondering how he will respond after the break.

And just to prove that I have the best stage management team on Earth, today the SMs brought fruit, chocolate, and candy to rehearsal (so we could have a little party), as well as homemade cards for the cast. What a great way to end these two weeks.

Sunday, December 16, 2007

I finally heard from my sound designer today, and while it's disappointing that we weren't able to get together before I left, what's even more disappointing is that he hasn't yet read the script and didn't get a chance to grab a copy before he too left town. I suppose I'm partly to blame since I could have tried harder to get in touch (although tracking down his contact info took a bit of work – no one seemed to have it), but on the other hand, if you know you're designing a show, one would think he'd make an effort to get in touch with *me*. What's done is done...

What is also strange about this situation is that I have very little idea of what I want the show's music to be. Generally, sound is one of the first elements that will coalesce for me, but in this instance, I'm at a bit of a loss. I know I don't want generic classical music, but something too modern wouldn't work either, I feel. Maybe a classical piece using modern instruments (guitar? percussion? electronic?)? This is definitely something I'll be giving more thought to over the break.

Monday, December 17, 2007

I received some great news today that marginally affects the play: I'll be presenting a paper on Robert Lepage (as yet unwritten but based on the seminar I recently gave for THTR 521) at the South West Texas Popular Culture/American Culture conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico, from February 13-16, 2008. This means that I won't be able to see any of the mid-run performances – but since I was only planning on attending three or four of the shows anyway, it's not a big deal at all. I'll be back for closing night, which means I'll be able to track the evolution of the piece after seeing opening, closing, and one other performance (likely the Monday evening).

Friday, December 21, 2007

I've been debating the past few days exactly how I'm going to approach the rehearsals when we pick back up again. I know I want to move from the broader pre-break rehearsals into more specific work, but I'm not sure the best way to go about it. Usually, I would put the scenes on their feet and work through each one (by verbing, more often than not) line by line. I don't think that method will necessarily work best with *The Learned Ladies*, however, since I'd like to take a less text-based approach to the next stage of rehearsals (not that I want to eschew the text work altogether, but I don't want to lose the physical foundation we've built).

What I'm leaning toward is a work-through of the play based on answering the questions raised in my questions analysis, while at the same time working on the stylistic elements of the production, which are mostly physical in nature, and which I mostly glossed over in the December rehearsals. This approach, I believe, will be more specific than the story/triggers/stakes work we have done, while also focusing on the play's physical world. This of course, may change between now and the 14 days until the next rehearsal.

I have decided, however, to forgo a lot of the "tricks" I was hoping to use, specifically, the flies and traps. I was going to fly Trissotin in for his first entrance, and I was hoping to use the traps to give a couple of the entrances a "surprise!" factor (having actors magically appear from behind stacks of books), but I think it would be more trouble than it's worth, since setting up the flies is a lot of work for an entrance that would happen during a scene change, and placing the stacks of books near the traps limits where we can place the stacks, so it's better, I think, to forget the whole thing.

Tuesday, January 1, 2008

I received an email from Aslam this afternoon, asking if I'd made any decisions about cutting/trimming Clitandre's speech from Act 4, Scene 3, since he thinks he can now make it work and would like another go at it. To which I responded: please, by all means, make it work!

As I've already written, I am loathe to cut the speech because it seems like the easy (read: lazy) way out, but the bit has never really worked for me – not when I first read it, not when we read around the table, not when we first rehearsed the scene, not when we ran the play before the break – so I was fairly convinced that it was gone. But I am more (more) than willing to let him try as much and for as long as wants to make it work. There's no real rush, I feel, to make the decision (I wanted to make it sooner so as not to keep him dangling – will we cut it? Won't we? – but if he's fine with waiting, I am as well), since the cut would only affect one other actor, and is unlikely to change any cues. We'll see what happens Friday when we run the play again, but likely won't come to a decision until after we've worked the scene once more.

Thursday, January 3, 2008

For the record: deciding to “work on the plane” is a bad idea. Especially if that plane is sold-out, too hot, and out of vegetarian meal options.

Friday, January 4, 2008

I decided the best way to get back into rehearsal mode after the break was to ease into things, so today was a light day: meet at noon, followed by a quick game and another stumble through of the play, to see what (if anything) stuck over the break.

To my (happy) surprise, quite a lot of what we did in December was still there in January. There were stumbles, and lines troubles (although as a whole the cast is further along the memorization train than I expected; but amount of text memorized does seem directly related to length of flight back to Vancouver), and Act 4 is very, very (very), messy (there is some work to do there, let me tell you), but as an exercise it worked quite well, despite the fact that focus was hard to come by as we reached the end of the play (some of this I attribute to the messiness of Act 4). The actors expressed surprise at how much they were able to maintain, and were happy just to dip their toes in the water for the first day back.

This is not to say that today’s work was simply a rehash of our December work. The women received their rehearsal corsets today, which made an immediate physical impact (even before the run they were running around – well, moving around – trying to learn what they could and could not do. The short answer: not much), and all were noticeably more winded after the run than they had been previously. It will be interesting to discover these limitations as we work through the play again. The men also received their rehearsal shoes, and those who wore them (I didn’t know they had been brought over, or I would have insisted everyone did. Why is it that women have no problem wearing rehearsal shoes but it always seems like a fight to get the men to do it? Or is that just my experience?) commented that it helped a great deal. Already I can see physical patterns changing, and I think these restrictions will help us work toward developing the style of the piece.

Also, I’m still not happy with most of the first entrances of the play. I don’t think there’s any punch to them yet. This is something else I’d like look at during our next work through.

Saturday, January 5, 2008

I’ve had to make some changes to the rehearsal schedule because of auditions for *Brave New Play Rites*, which are happening January 13 and 14 (since I’m the TA for the course, I should be there). So we’ll rehearse Friday the 11th and Saturday the 12th (previously days off) instead, with the actors having the 13th and 14th free. I didn’t want to make the change, but I really should be at the auditions.

In rehearsal today we worked through Act 1, trying to build on the work we started in December. As stated, one of my goals with this second work through of the play is to move from the general to more specific choices, which I think we (mostly) accomplished today. The action in Act 1, Scene 1, for example, is much clearer now than it was previously, but looking at the blocking, it is in a rougher state than it was before. I was hoping that we'd be able to move closer to a "final" (as final as it can ever be, anyway) blocking, but instead we seemed to have taken a small step backwards (or at the very least, sideways).

The blocking question was only a problem, however, in the Act's first scene. When we rehearsed Scene 3, we made the same progress when trying to find more specific choices, but were also able to find an evolution in the blocking as well. Both Courtney and Aslam (the scene's two actors) are having more fun – as actors and characters – than they were before, and it was also evident that they have both been working over the break, which made everything move much faster (again, I was pleasantly surprised by the amount of prep work done by the cast over the break). We were finished, in fact, almost two hours ahead of schedule today because everyone was so prepared (or because my directing was so awesome. I'm going to go with the former, however). Hopefully we can keep this up.

I do feel however, that we are somewhat spinning our wheels before we move into the Freddie Wood on Tuesday, which I think may have contributed to the blocking on Scene 1 not moving forward. We took, on more than one occasion, a "let's wait and see what happens when we get to the theatre" approach, and I can't decide if it's a cop-out, laziness (or both), or foresight. We'll see, I guess.

Sunday, January 6, 2008

We started at the top of Act 2 today, and once again we worked faster than we had anticipated (we didn't adjust the schedule after yesterday just in case it was a fluke), ending the day shortly after 2:00 pm. We could have called other actors in and moved forward a little more, but I didn't want to call in people who we'd previously given the day off to. We didn't get quite as much done as we could have, but we got as far as we had scheduled, so since we didn't lose any time, it's not a big deal.

I'm growing mildly concerned, though, about Shaun's progress, as he seems further behind the rest of the cast. Like everyone, coming back from the break he was off book, but it doesn't seem like any work has been done. He has expressed some frustration to me about Ariste's role in the show – he seems like more of a device than a character – and I think that may be stalling him, but at the same time when I question him to try and get at the heart of Ariste's action, he dances around the questions, avoiding answering. I don't want to spoon-feed him, but if he keeps working this way I'll be forced to, I think.

Stage management and I are also in the process of trying to find an appropriate time for Nick Harrison – our fight director – to come in to rehearsal for his first session. I'd like to hold off for a bit, I think, and have him in rehearsal around the 17th or 20th of the month, after we've had a chance to go over the blocking once more before adding the

complication of fight choreography. But another part of me thinks that it might be better to have Nick in sooner rather than later, since it's probably smart to give the actors as much lead time as possible (especially Michael, who has two or three pratfalls to rehearse). I'm going to take another day to think it over, but the schedule will more likely than not be influenced by when Nick is available.

Tuesday, January 8, 2008

Set issues dominated today's rehearsal. Since it was our first day on-stage at the Freddie Wood, I thought there would be some tweaking to do, but either the floor was mis-taped in the DSS or there has been a change to the ground plan that I wasn't aware of, but when we got to the theatre, the curtains hanging from the ceiling became a problem, as they are now hanging directly in front of the upstage right pile of books, where a great deal of the Act 1 blocking takes place. Stephania wants to keep the curtains where they are, and would rather move the book pile. I think we should move the curtains. If we leave them where they are, we'll completely cut off the upstage portion of the stage, and I want the option of moving the actors up there. Stephania and I have agreed to meet tomorrow to try and solve the problem.

A very pleasant surprise, however, was when I saw the fireplace. It's much taller than I had thought it would be (I was told its height, but since we were using a small make-shift unit in the DSS, I had become accustomed to it being much smaller. I love the size of the set piece, and its imposing structure greatly added to Act 2, Scene 7 (which we also rehearsed today), when Gord was running around the stage tossing books into the fire.

Today's rehearsal focused mostly on that scene, but it is still not where I'd like it to be. Again, I think that specificity is the problem, as Gord doesn't yet have a clear, consistent pattern to follow, which is muddying both the action and the comedy. We are going to spend some more time on the scene tomorrow, and this is what I plan to focus on.

Wednesday, January 9, 2008

We began today where we left off yesterday, in the middle of Act 2, Scene 7. And like yesterday, unfortunately, the scene is still in a very rough state. This stems, I think, from the fact that I don't want to impose a pattern on Gord when he is throwing the books into the fire, instead hoping he will discover one himself. And while he has roughed out a path for himself, he is following it inconsistently, and as a result the meaning of his speech is being lost. I want to look at this scene again before we run the play again (which is looking like it will be January 20th), at which point I am going to work through the movement of the piece moment by moment, using the rough map Gord has provided to give him specific points at which to move. This will also help, I think, sharpen some of the comedy for Maura and Kate, who have both confessed they feel a little lost at some points throughout the scene. Once Gord's pattern is established and more consistent, that framework should allow us to focus on the women.

Later on in the evening Shaun was back in rehearsal to work Act 2, Scene 9, with Gord. Again, he was having problems speaking in terms of action, and again he was also having difficulty making more specific choices. It seems that he understands the scene intellectually, but is having difficulty translating that understanding into action. At the same time, I don't want to just tell him what to do, so for the moment we're at somewhat of an impasse. I'm in the middle of compiling a list of scenes I'd like to work the week of January 21-27 (when we're back in the DSS while *Hey Girl!* plays in the theatre), and the Ariste scenes will definitely be included. If then I'm still getting the same results from him, I will have to change my approach.

Things are moving along technically, according to updates received at this afternoon's production meeting. I was hoping to get the wigs for the actors sooner rather than later, but Costumes is concerned about the possible upkeep problems, and are also afraid they may get ruined (to which I ask: if the wigs may get ruined from wear, isn't it better to find out sooner than later?). We were able to reach a compromise, however, in that we'll have access to the wigs the week before tech (Jan 28-31), when we're working in the theatre again. It was also decided that there will be a "test" curtain hung (hanged?) in the theatre very soon, not only to see how it hangs, but also because it will affect entrances and exits, and again, it's better to solve these problems sooner.

Speaking of curtains, Stephania and I were able to reach a compromise on their hanging positions. The mid-stage curtain will be moved slightly off-stage, and the upstage pile of books will be moved slightly on-stage, freeing up sightlines to allow us to use the upstage space. We also altered the position of the writing desk and chaise lounge, and both items are now downstage of the proscenium. Since I want to use the curtain, there is going to be a problem getting the furniture there at the top of the show (I don't want it placed in front of the curtain pre-show and during intermission), but that is something that I will deal with later (maybe not the best idea, but that's what's going to happen).

Thursday, January 10, 2008

We finally confirmed Nick Harrison's first rehearsal – January 24th. This is later than I would like, but because of the changes we've made to the rehearsal schedule to accommodate the *Brave New* auditions, as well as Nick's schedule, this was the earliest date we could come up with.

We've begun work on Act 3, and along the way have solved the biggest problem from the December work: the upstage armchairs. By slightly rearranging the seating, we were able to get away with only moving one chair from downstage, giving the actors more than enough room to sweep around it so they can get downstage of the bench (this is what I thought the solution would be, but I needed to see the set and actors in space to confirm it). The question of how big the women's dresses are going to be was raised by a couple of cast members, who are still concerned that there may not be enough room for them to maneuver around some of the furniture, or potentially sit next to each other on the chaise or bench (one actor even mentioned she was wondering if she would fit on the chair. I told her that if she were not able to do that, we'd fix it so she can. The costumes need to

be functional as well...). I decided to leave the question open for the time being (although we did send a note to Carmen, asking how wide the dresses will end up being), but I'm fairly certain I'll have to shift some of the blocking – specifically the moment when all four women are on the chaise. That sequence is a pipe dream, I think.

The approach I have been taking with this second work through has changed, as well. Previously, I had been focusing on the questions from my “Questions Analysis,” attempting to answer as many of them as possible, with the hope that the answers would lead the actors to more specific choices. Over the past two or three rehearsals, however, I have been much less diligent in that method, focusing instead on more technical aspects of the production: blocking and style. I have found myself imposing more stylistic elements as the rehearsals have gone on, as well as blocking minutiae. This change, unexpected as it was, has, I believe, led us to more specificity in our choices than the questions method did. I'm at a bit of a loss as to why exactly, but my best guess is that because we had such a solid foundation (based on the story/stakes/triggers method) from our work in December, that the clarification of the blocking and the forward momentum from discovering the play's style are helping to refine actor choices even more.

Either way, the work we have done on Act 3 thus far has been great, so I'm going to continue with this method, as the actors are now starting to get a feel for the style and I feel myself imposing it less and less and instead I'm taking my cues from them. It's been fun.

Friday, January 11, 2008

Gayle and Cathy came to today's rehearsal to look at breathing (for the women and their corsets, mostly) and deportment (for the guys and girls). We ran Act 3, Scenes 1-3 for them so they could get an idea of where we are. Cathy's work is especially important for the men, I think, as they're having a bit more difficulty grasping the period movement than the women are. Granted, the women have an advantage being dressed in rehearsal shoes, skirts, and bustiers daily, but even before we were given their rehearsal costumes they had a better handle on the movement. There was a noticeable improvement after the short session, but toward the end of the evening I could see old habits starting to bleed back in again (the biggest offender being the men crossing their legs in a twentieth century way, and to a lesser extent the men crossing their arms in front of their chests). We're going to see if we can schedule another session with her – specifically focusing in the men – during the week we're back in the DSS.

Afterwards we continued our work on Act 3, bringing Vadius in for the “battle” scene between the poets. What's missing from the scene at this moment is the build in both the effusive praise and insults between Trissotin and Vadius. As it stands now, both Nick and Jeff are playing the scene very generally instead of getting to the specificity of each praise or insult. The build in the first section needs to be greater (and go further) so when it is revealed that Trissotin wrote the poem Vadius so harshly criticized, the comedic turn in bigger. Both actors understood this, but we weren't able to make much progress in

rehearsal. They're both going to verb (the dreaded verbs!) the scene, and we'll look at it again when we're in the DSS as well (that list is starting to get long...).

Also, I was informed by stage management that Aslam is sick and may not make rehearsal tomorrow. Michelle put together a "Plan B" schedule in case he can't make it in – and I asked her to relay to him and rest of the company that if you're sick please stay home, for fear of infecting anyone/everyone else; I don't need any martyrs in rehearsal – and everyone has agreed to be "on call" just in case. It would be unfortunate if he's not able to make it in, since we're moving into work on Act 4 (from which point he's on stage almost the entire time), which means we won't be able to move forward. It would, though, give us the opportunity to go back and look at Act 2, Scene 7 again, as well as Act 3, so there wouldn't be much time lost.

Saturday, January 12, 2008

As suspected, Aslam was unable to attend rehearsal today, so we went with "Plan B," which included returning to Act 2, Scene 7, Act 3, Scenes 1-5, and Act 5, Scene 1. We were able to really work 2.7, finally solidifying Gord's movement pattern and giving Maura and Kate some more structure as well. As we first ran it the scene seemed a little too "directed" for my liking, but as Gord got more comfortable with the blocking we established it began to look better and better, and he even began to play a little bit. He is also still having some difficulty with the lines in that particular scene, but now that he has a physical imprint for it, I suspect those problems will quickly disappear.

While Aslam's absence slowed down the rehearsal process a bit, it did underscore something very important: I have a lot of time left, and I'm not exactly sure what I'm going to do with it. I'm so used to working under such intense time constraints (especially on *Death & Taxes*, where I had something ridiculous like 20 days rehearsal), that the luxury of time is somewhat paralyzing. My first instinct was to get another full work through of the play done, but the more I mull it over, the less enamoured I become with the idea. As mentioned, Michelle has already begun compiling a list of scenes/moments I want to look at in more detail, and I think really delving into some of the production's problem spots would be a much better use of time than a cursory glance over the entire piece. Plus, with the final two pre-tech weeks spread out over two rehearsal halls, I think using the DSS week to narrow the focus (and potentially return to the table for some really tricky bits) would be very beneficial.

It is a strange (but pleasant) situation to be in, having "too much" (is there such a thing? Probably) time. My plan for the first "extra" week is taking shape. But what am I going to do for the second?

Tuesday, January 15, 2008

Back to Act 4 today, and we're still encountering the problems we had before: namely, I don't feel that Scenes 2 and 3 move the action of the play forward at all. It is obvious, however, that the actors have been working on the scenes outside of rehearsal, since they

all came in with thoughts and ideas. After working through the scenes a couple of times (to less frustration than when we had previously rehearsed them), it felt like some progress was made, but the two scenes are still somewhat of a mystery to me. Why does Molière choose to stop the play for two scenes so a) Armande and Clitandre can have a “break up” scene; and b) Clitandre can lambaste Trissotin for thinking the court has poor taste? I have a better grip on Scene 2, I feel, since the Armande/Henriette/Clitandre love-triangle subplot has been building throughout the play, and the scene is a natural climax for that action (though Armande’s vacillation from “I’ll do all I can to help you out” to “will you sacrifice me to their happiness?” is still puzzling). I’m not as confident in Scene 3, where Clitandre’s speech defending the court still has me scratching my head as to its purpose (though Aslam was able to make the attack work much better than it had previously).

Stephen was in rehearsal today, however, and offered some insight based around Trissotin’s reactions to Clitandre’s rant, as well as how his failure to respond to the accusation put forth by Clitandre might affect Philaminte’s and Armande’s attitude toward him. I had previously thought Philaminte’s decision to change the date of the wedding was triggered by her anger over Clitandre’s attack and Vadius’ letter. Stephen thinks that because of his performance in the verbal battle against Clitandre (which he loses), as well as the Vadius letter, she hastily moves the wedding forward to save face and regain control. This may also help with Armande’s transition from petulant rejected sister to ally of Clitandre and Henriette. Instead of being influenced solely by the letter, she too could begin to see cracks in Trissotin’s façade; but instead of following her mother’s path, she breaks with her for the first time in the play.

I’m anxious to get back to these scenes, since we seemed to make a little progress today, and I’d like to get these ideas on their feet. We’re going to look at Act 4 again next Tuesday, when we’re back in the DSS.

Wednesday, January 16, 2008

More Act 4 work tonight, our last day of rehearsal before a three-day break (I gave the cast January 17th off so they could attend the *Old Goriot* opening, not knowing that the opening was sold out. And once I’d given the day off, I didn’t want to take it back), and like yesterday, I felt that we made some progress on the scenes, but still haven’t really cracked them.

I have always felt that I have a good handle on Scene 4 (the arrival of Julien with Vadius’ letter denouncing Trissotin and Philaminte’s subsequent pushing forward of the intended marriage), since it marks one of the major turning points in the plot. Small moments in the scene still aren’t working for me, though. Julien’s exit, for starters, has no weight to it. He just seems to disappear after Philaminte tears up the letter in disgust. The handing off/handing back of the stack of books Julien brings is problematic for me as well, since at this point it’s more than a little messy, and I think we can get some better laughs out of it. That being said, the scene’s story is very clear, so it’s just a matter of fine-tuning these small moments. We began this work tonight, but never got around to making any clear

decisions, as we tried a few different ideas but the actors wanted to think about it some more (Maura, especially, likes to go away and think on things, but she gets caught in her head a lot, especially around things that she's not sure she's going to be able to do in her costume. It can be frustrating).

Scene 5 (a short moment between Armande and Clitandre) has been more problematic, but we're close to solving it, I think. The problem isn't the scene itself, but what comes after. In the scene Armande promises to help Clitandre and Henriette get married. She then disappears, and when she does show up again, has only one line at the end of the play: "will you sacrifice me to their happiness?" The motivation for her switch is clear (the letter sent by Vadius, and, as suggested by Stephen Heatley, Trissotin's inability to best Clitandre in a verbal duel), but the switch back is what is keeping me from sleeping through the night. Maryanne is having an equally (likely more) difficult time with the switch, but finding a motivation is difficult when your character goes away for most of the remainder of the play. Either she is lying in this scene (which I don't believe) or she has a change of heart somewhere in Act 5 (which I believe but can't find any evidence for). We achieved a nice moment between Armande and Clitandre in this scene, making some very good progress on what has been a frustrating scene. We're all on the page as in thinking that Armande's offer to help *is* genuine, which clarified a lot and gave the two former lovers a satisfying coda to their relationship. But now the switch in Act 5 is still there. We'll be rehearsing that on Sunday before we run the play, I have high hopes that we can clear it up then.

Sunday, January 20, 2008

Big day today. First we worked through the remainder of Act 5 (Scenes 2-4) and did a run. The cast was nervous since we had an "audience" of designers, crew, and coaches/advisors in the house, and so the run was a little messier than I had hoped. The actors didn't seem to hold on to a lot of the work we had done over the past couple of weeks, with some scenes taking a few steps backwards. I'm not sure if it's the fact that we had people watching or if some of our work didn't have enough time to properly integrate, but I was a little disappointed at the end of the day. The actors, however, seemed collectively more disappointed than I was, so I'm sure they will beat themselves up far longer and far more effectively than I would, so I didn't have to say much after the run besides "good work getting through it" and "I'll give notes tomorrow."

It was nice, despite some of the set backs, to see where the holes in the play really are. Act 1 moves along nicely (a nice achievement considering we had yet to work that section of the play on the Freddie Wood stage; it's the first thing we'll do once we're back in the space on January 28), as does Act 3 and parts of Act 5. There is still a bunch of work to do on the oft-mentioned Act 4, and Act 2 is also much looser than I would like (specifically Scene 7 – where Gord throws all the books – which is especially disappointing considering we spent so much time on it the other day when Aslam was sick). I was expecting the muddiness in Act 4 since there are places where we hadn't even set blocking yet, but they soldiered through it, and I am confident based on the work we've done that we can get that section where it needs to be.

I'm now questioning my rehearsal plan for next week. We will definitely be looking at Act 4 on Tuesday, and Nick Harrison is coming in to look at the fight choreography on Thursday, but Monday and Wednesday are now wide open. I think I should take another look at Act 5 (I've ignored it a little bit, an unfortunate side effect of Act 5 being at the end of the play...), which I think may need repetition more than anything else, since I feel the messiness there is more due to lack of familiarity with the material than lack of specifics, but Act 2 also needs a brush up, I feel. The best strategy, I think, will be to work Act 2 on Monday, Act 4 Tuesday, and Act 5 on Wednesday, before Nick looks at the fighting on Thursday. Sunday, then, becomes a "free" day where we can revisit Acts 1 and/or 3 (I will definitely be working Act 1 when we get back to the Freddie Wood, but I'm cautious about leaving it until then because it may be too long), along with anything the cast feels they may want to revisit (an all-request rehearsal, anyone?)

Finally, we had some minor set issues this afternoon – based on a miscommunication – when I was told that the upstage right book unit was going to be vastly different than what I had been led to believe (in a nutshell: it would be taller and thinner). Stephania told me she ran the changes by my and I approved, but while I remembered the conversation, I don't remember being told of any changes to that particular unit (which I wouldn't have said yes to). We were able to solve the problem fairly quickly by adding some depth to the unit, which will allow the actors to sit on two at a time, and we won't have to change any blocking (and the guys in the shop can just add one of the existing rehearsal units to the back of it, which means nothing else will have to be built). I was a bit snippy with Stephania, though, which is not my style and I felt bad about it all night. I'll definitely apologize to her when I see her next.

Monday, January 21, 2008

I decided to make a slight change in my rehearsal plan for the week, since Gayle was in today to work with a few of the actors, there was a bit of juggling to be done. Initially, I had decided to make this evening rehearsal an "all request" evening, working any bits (excluding those in Acts 4 and 5, which I plan on working Tuesday and Wednesday) they felt would benefit from another look. Since Gayle wanted some time with about eight actors, however, I decided to let that schedule (which had been out together by stage management) dictate what we would do based on who was available.

It worked out quite well, as we had the opportunity to go back and look at Act 1, Scenes 1, 2, and (the end of) 4, which I hadn't intended on doing this week because a) I thought it was in pretty good shape, especially when compared with Act 4 and parts of Act 5; and b) besides yesterday's run we hadn't worked any of the Act in the Freddie Wood, so my feeling was to hold off on another pass through until we were back on stage. But since both Courtney and Maryanne were available right away, we started at the top of the play, and as stated, the work was great. While previously the relationship between the sisters had been cordial – with any animosity hidden beneath a mask of proper manners – we were finally able to get a handle on the rivalry between Henriette and Armande in those first two scenes, which gives much more of a punch to the opening of the play. It will

also help Maryanne, I hope, with the difficulty she is having with Armande's Act 5 reversal (the reversal from her previous reversal). Most importantly, though, was the both Courtney and Maryanne find the scene more fun to play.

Today's rehearsal also marked a turning point in how the play is being rehearsed, as we've moved from focusing on small moments to running larger chunks. This change is important to me because it's going to allow (I hope) the actors the freedom to start playing as we have a very solid foundation after four-and-a-half weeks of rehearsal, and except for a few previously mentioned spots in Acts 4 and 5 (and maybe a bit of Act 2) the action of the piece is very clear. I want the running of these bigger chunks (whole scenes or larger sections of longer scenes) to allow the actors to begin to make the piece their own with less interference from me (except, of course, in those places – I'm talking to you, Act 4! – where some interference is still needed).

Tuesday, January 22, 2008

Back to Act 4 this evening, with the plan to look at the first four scenes (and if time permitted, Scene 5 as well). I had four goals coming into this rehearsal: first, to chart the success of Clitandre (in his verbal battle with Trissotin) in the eyes of Philaminte and Armande and see what causes Philaminte to rashly move the wedding forward while her daughter sides with the lovers; second, to see how the fight – specifically, Clitandre's winning of it – affects Trissotin; third, to move the Armande/Clitandre scene away from melodrama (where it was leaning); and finally, to find more specificity in Clitandre's speech about the court, moving it away from a general rant and more toward an attack and exposure of Trissotin and his motivations.

While we didn't accomplish each of these goals, progress was definitely made toward all four, as Maura and Maryanne both found letting Clitandre be more successful helped them. For Maura, it allowed more doubt to be planted, so her fear of losing face (from the "troop of enemies" attacking Trissotin) was greater and her decision to push the wedding up comes from there, instead of spite. It also allowed Maryanne to have more of a reason to side with Clitandre (previously, she had been playing the letter from Vadius as motivation, but had expressed some doubt that it alone would change her mind). When rehearsing that scene we also looked at Trissotin's invulnerability, trying to let Clitandre affect him more and more. The two characters had been fighting in similar styles, and we needed to let Trissotin become more unraveled by his inability to best Clitandre. The actors played with a few extremes during the scene – one go at it had Trissotin left a simpering child – but didn't settle on anything. There was a lot brought to the table, however, and each actor wanted to let things marinate some more since, with Trissotin's armour now cracked, the tone of the scene changed dramatically.

The Armande/Clitandre scene proved more difficult, but I still think the scene is moving forward (albeit slowly). Aslam is finding more nuance in his arguments to Armande and Philaminte (having moved away from the bitter and spite-filled tirade it had been previously), but the two actors are still playing the scene as a pair of angst ridden teenagers, and it lacks the sense of fun that the rest of the play. We spent some time

talking about how to make the scene more fun, but it led to neither character taking the scene seriously, and there were no stakes. I'm not yet sure what the solution is, though I'm sure the blocking isn't helping much, as we haven't even really settled on any sort of blocking (so both actors are floating out there). Early next week when we look at the scene again I'm going to impose a pattern on the two to see what that does for them.

Wednesday, January 23, 2008

The day started out with a production meeting followed by a chat and a listen with my sound designers. The three designers each brought a thing or two for us to listen, based on our last conversation – classical/baroque music with a modern twist, either electronic/digitized or more modern instruments such as electric guitar. The most successful finds, I think, were the pieces using modern instruments as opposed to electronica, as the electronic music seemed either too harsh or too sterile, while the other options (specifically a piece played entirely on an electric guitar) fit the world of the play better, I feel, because the “twist” was more subtle. I'm not sure if anything we heard today will end up in the show but at the very least we now have a more solid frame moving forward.

In the evening we rehearsed Act 5, and while I felt the first two scenes were in good shape, I wanted to look at the blocking for the last two scenes, since the action clumped upstage a bit and the last moments of the play don't have any punch to them. The problem we ran in to, however, was that after “fixing” the blocking at the end of Scene 4 the change set off a chain reaction forcing us to go back and re-block almost the entire scene (and the new blocking was no where near as effective as what we had lost; it was dull and appeared very forced, but maybe that's just because I was so fond of much of the old stuff). In the end we scrapped the changes – for fear of unraveling the whole thing – and instead opted to make only one or two slight adjustments, and was happy with where the scene was, even though it wasn't much different at the end of the evening than it was at the beginning.

This is related, I think, to a problem I've been having: doubt. The length of the rehearsal period – while a blessing – has allowed for some doubt to creep in regarding some of our choices, and I'm starting to second-guess myself. Scenes that I felt were really working, now seem flat to me, and comic bits that used to be very funny don't always seem to be anymore. I feel as if I'm questioning all my decisions, and some of the actors are as well (they're commenting more and more that I'm not laughing in rehearsal anymore, and subsequently asking if there's anything they can do to make the scene “funny again”).

I'm not sure what the solution is (if there even is a “solution” – or a problem), but I'm not going to rush to blow the whole thing up. I'm losing objectivity, and need to take a step back – though how I do that I'm not exactly sure. Hopefully once the technical elements start to come in next week that will help freshen my perspective. I am also going to try and watch Sunday's run with different eyes. What this means I'm not sure yet, but I would like to find a way to take a small step back from the process, something I have

always found difficult to do (and am finding especially difficult on this show, because of the long rehearsal period, I think).

Thursday, January 24, 2008

Today was fight choreography day. Nick Harrison came in for about two and a half hours; mainly to safety what we had already set.

I was worried that it may have been a bit late in the process to be introducing these elements (but as I've written earlier, it was the soonest we could get Nick in to a rehearsal), but after running through the seven or so scenes we needed to look at – as well as couple of actor requests – I don't think it's going to be a problem. Nothing we set was all that complicated, and the more difficult moments – Kate and Aslam at the writing desk in Act 1, Scene 4; Maura chasing Yoshie in Act 2, Scene 6; and Courtney and Nick on the chaise in Act 5, Scene 1 – we had been working for a while and, as mentioned above, needed a more trained eye to make sure we were being safe more than anything else. It was a short day (we were all out of there just before 8:00), but working on fights is always fun, and since a few of the actors are currently feeling a little under the weather, it was a good way to end the week in the DSS.

And while at first I was weary of moving back to the rehearsal hall after two weeks on stage, I feel that we got some important work done over the past four days (we're still here for the run on Sunday, granted), and that it helped the process more than it hindered it. There was a different energy in the room when we moved back – there was a greater focus from both the actors and myself – as we moved into what I guess I can describe as a “smaller picture” mindset. We knew the challenges coming into the week (especially those in Act 4), and the “regression” (I'm using a lot of quotes today) back to the rehearsal hall was an excellent method to get me thinking about the play differently than I had in the Freddie Wood, and allowed us to focus strictly on the action between characters, worrying less about (approaching) technical considerations, staging (to an extent), and story (not because it isn't necessary, but because we have such a strong grasp of it). I'm sure the impending time crunch – only one week until tech – also had something to do with it as well.

I feel that some of the best work we did during the rehearsal process has been accomplished over this past week, regardless of the fact that some second-guessing has also popped up (the two may be related, actually: is what we've done this week making me feel the previous work isn't up to the same standard?). We moved forward a great deal this week by looking at small moments. Funny, that.

Friday, January 25, 2008

I went to see Catalyst Theatre's production of *Frankenstein* at the Cultch tonight, and one thing about the production struck me as being important/related to *The Learned Ladies*: sightlines. Like our production, many of the entrances in *Frankenstein* were upstage, and those sitting on the extremes (like I happened to be) had a difficult time not only seeing

the entrances, but some of the action was staged in the upstage right and left corners. It was incredibly frustrating to be craning over, straining to see, for almost the entire show. Since we have similar sightline issues with the extreme seats in the Freddie Wood, this is something that I'll want to try and fix when we get back to the stage next week.

Sunday, January 27, 2008

It's funny how I considered Thursday to be our last day in the DSS, even though we had today's run scheduled to be there as well. The actors had a makeup/wig session in the morning, so there was no rehearsing to be had before we began the run at 2:30 (although I learned that the wigs aren't ready yet, so the tutorial ran short, which means we could have looked at a scene or two before the run, which is annoying; more disconcerting, however, is the fact that the wigs aren't ready, and I'd like them for rehearsals at some point next week).

The run, thankfully, went very well. Eerily enough, there were some focus issues – actors cracking on more than one occasion – but they were playing more than they had been previously, and most of all they appeared to be having *fun*, which, right now, I'll take a slight loss of focus for. The playing, I hope, is coming from a sense of confidence in the show.

I'm not sure, however, that I watched the show any differently than I had previously. I made a conscious decision to not do any work on the show from Friday night to this afternoon (in an attempt to be as fresh as possible for the run), but I still feel that I'm having a hard time stepping back and being objective. I'm not sure what the solution is (though admittedly, my not working on the show for two days was a little lame) or if there is a solution. Will the change of scenery back to the Freddie Wood help? What about when the technical elements start to be added this week? I hope so, on both accounts, but more likely than not I'll have to continue grappling with this feeling of unobjectivity (inobjectivity?) for the next week or so, until an audience can tell us what's working. Maybe that's what it all comes down to: they're going to need an audience soon (as will I). But how do I get to that point?

Now I need to get in to rehearsal planning for next week. I know I want to get a run in on Thursday, but if we're able to sneak another in on Wednesday as well, that would be an almost perfect scenario, I think. Monday needs to be devoted, partly, to putting Act 1 on its feet on stage (amazingly, it hasn't been rehearsed in there yet – save for a run – because of the timing of rehearsals), and I think we can also get a work through of the rest of the play done with the remainder of Monday and Tuesday's rehearsals.

Monday, January 28, 2008

We were back in the theatre today, and finally got in a work-through of Act 1 on stage. There weren't any major problems (while we'd never rehearsed the Act on stage, we had run it a couple of times when running the entire play, so it wasn't a completely foreign experience), and I wasn't anticipating any, but it was nice – with just over a week to open

– to have finally rehearsed the entire show in the space. The only difficulty we ran into had to do with the upstage pile of books. Now that we have the actual set piece (as opposed to the black rehearsal blocks we’ve been using up to now), we have discovered that it’s a bit taller and a bit “rougher” than we had anticipated, meaning that Courtney may not be able to jump up and sit atop it. Because of its construction, the pile also has some rough edges which may catch – and rip – the costumes, so that too may preclude Courtney and Aslam from flirting on it as they’ve been doing. Props told us they could sand down and safety the edges more (they’re also concerned about the costumes being damaged), but we reblocked that small section anyway, as a precaution, and the new staging works better, I think, than what we had previously, as Aslam is now facing upstage much less.

I had fallen in love a little bit, I’m sure, with blocking we had set for that scene back in December which had the two lovers sitting next to each other on top of the pile, but it definitely was not the best blocking for the scene. The picture was gorgeous, though, and I think I let that get in the way of what was best for the scene. Both actors said the new blocking is also easier for them to play, so all around, I would say it’s a win for everyone. I am going to question now, however, some of the other staging that I love (and that’s been hanging around for a while) which may not be serving the story as well as it could. I won’t go and toss away everything, but I should look more critically at certain sections and ask myself what the blocking is accomplishing (but not make changes just for the sake of it).

There was also a bit of a scare at rehearsal today when Jeff walked in with his arm in a sling. Thankfully he wasn’t hurt too much (and while he explained to me how he got hurt, I still don’t quite understand it), and put his arm in the sling as a precaution. Unfortunately, while I wanted to work through the end of Act 3, we were only able to get as far as the end of Act 2 (so Jeff wasn’t needed anyway), which means it’s unlikely we’ll be able to get two runs in before tech. It’s disappointing because I thought I would be able to work faster at this point – we’re cleaning moments up with this work, and trying to get ourselves re-acclimated to the Freddie Wood stage – but I don’t want to rush through it just for the sake of another run. Hopefully I can pick up the pace a bit tomorrow, but I’m not going to force it.

Tuesday, January 29, 2008

I was hoping to get through Acts 3-5 today, but like Monday we were able to work through only two Acts, leaving Act 5 for tomorrow evening (when we’ll also work the scene changes, as well as the intro to the play, a short sequence to open the play). Like yesterday the work was good, as we were able to take some of the air out of Act 3 (some of Nick’s pauses and pontifications have been killing me), as well as sort out a couple of blocking moments that have been frustrating me.

Maybe most importantly, however, was the work we were able to get accomplished on (the dreaded) Act 4. I finally feel the blocking in Scene 3 (Clitandre vs. Trissotin) is telling a story, as opposed the aimless wandering and declaring that had been happening

previously. By keeping Philaminte, Armande, and Trissotin grounded, the scene has transformed from a chase into more of a courtroom scene, but Aslam picked spots to approach and address each of the other characters directly, which makes his arguments land much better, and also helped him find the level of distress necessary for Philaminte to say “you speak most heatedly.”

Shaun has also taken a great step forward in the last two days, physically, vocally, and in terms of Ariste’s own story. He seems to have finally figured out his role in the action (motivator for Chrysale), and is beginning to have some fun with it (as is Gord, who is looking to his brother for approval more often, and who is also beginning to really find his character as someone who is easily pushed and pulled from one side to the other).

The technical aspect is starting to come together, as the set seems about 90-95% up (and looks fantastic), and we seem to have settled on some music for tech weekend as well. Honestly, I’m not all that thrilled with the sound for the show. It’s serviceable, but I would have much preferred something more than “baroque music gone wild!” But with the short timeline we’ve had, I think it will be alright.

Now that we have the set all but up, I really want to see some costumes on stage. I asked if we could get the wigs (or even some rehearsal wigs) a couple of days early so the actors can have some practice in them before a dress rehearsal (as discussed at production meetings), but I was told – in no uncertain terms – absolutely not. My argument is that the actors need time to get used to having extra weight (regardless of how much it actually is) on their heads; the costume shop tells me that the real wigs won’t be ready before Sunday and that rehearsal wigs would be useless because they won’t be the same shape/weight as the real ones. This is a battle I am definitely not going to win, so hopefully, everything will work out (that’s what I’ll keep telling myself, anyway).

Wednesday, January 30, 2008

I had a meeting with Stephen Heatley the other day, and he challenged me to find a better way to incorporate some of the lazzo into the action. He was speaking specifically about Act 3, Scene 2, when Trissotin is flirting with Henriette while the Learned Ladies gab downstage. The same is true in Act 5, however, when chaos has begun to reign in the dying moments of the play as Chrysale and Philaminte try to wake the Notary while Henriette and Clitandre make out while Bélise and Armande commiserate while Martine and Lépine make out. There is a lot going on and today – while we worked Act 5 – my goal was to clean that up, allowing each of those moments to happen, but also allowing the audience to see them all. We were moderately successful, I think, as we were able to delay/shorten some of the “bits,” but even as we rehearsed it the actors were taking more liberties with each successful run (this is one of those sections that may slowly creep out of control once the run starts). I think I was able to successfully integrate the Trissotin/Henriette lazzi into the action of Act 3, and if the cast is able to hold things together in Act 5, I think the last moments will be equally successful.

We also spent a fair bit of time on the Trissotin/Martine interaction in Scene 3, which, I think, is another of those bits that I've fallen in love with but which don't serve the play as well (or at all) as they could. Martine's sexual attack on Trissotin, while funny, doesn't really come from anywhere, especially since she has just spent the past two pages speaking about how much she hates pedants. The key, I think, is to have Martine attempting to embarrass Trissotin (or maybe teach?) in front of the entire room. Nick and Yoshie sort of got there as we were rehearsing it, but it still wasn't quite working (they both asked if they we could leave it for a couple of days while they thought more about it). If we can't get the moment to work I'm not sure what we'll do. I want to have a back-up plan ready, but last time I tried to make any changes to Act 5, the whole thing started to unravel.

I had hoped to be able to choreograph the scene changes and intro this evening as well, but the entire crew wasn't available, so I didn't feel there was much point in rehearsing with part of the crew and have to go back when everyone was available. I have the transitions all choreographed on paper, so I don't anticipate it taking more than an hour or so (there are six changes, but two are minor: the intro, Act 1-2, Act 2-3, Act 3-intermission, intermission-Act 4, and Act 4-5), which means we should be able to get it done before the run tomorrow night.

Thursday, January 31, 2008

What a surreal week this has been. On the one hand I feel like we've gotten quite a bit accomplished, but on the other, I feel like there has been a lot of time squandered. We have some technical elements but aren't allowed access to others, and two nights we went home earlier than expected, but not because we finished early.

Adding to this is that the run, scheduled for tonight, unfortunately had to be cancelled because one of the actors had a death in the family. The actor told me they could be back in time for the run, but really, being with family is more important than a run of the play (in Theatre vs. Life, Life always wins). It's unfortunate because the week went from having two runs scheduled to one to none, which is what I think is fuelling my feeling that nothing much has been accomplished this week.

We were still able to stage the intro and transitions, however, which went off without a hitch (stage management was super prepared, with props having been meticulously tracked). The transitions are running about 30-45 seconds each, which will hopefully be brought down by 5-10 seconds each with practice, and the intro is running just over two minutes, which may be too long. I'm unsure about cutting it down because a) I don't want the introduction to seem like an excuse to get the chaise lounge moved on stage (which it is); and b) I'd like to use the time to introduce the characters and give a quick snapshot of their characters, while also giving a small story. What we've staged does all that, I think. But because we bring the chaise on at the top of the show (because it sits on the curtain line), we also have to get it off before intermission, and then on again after intermission, and off again at the end of the show. These other moves slow things down a bit, admittedly, but having the chaise on stage – and in front of the curtain – at the top

of the show isn't an option because it looks terrible, and moving it upstage of the curtain (a good meter and a half) throws the set way off. I think I've incorporated the moving of the furniture into the action (and created a little story), but we'll see. I wish there was another solution, but at the moment I am at a loss.

Saturday, February 02, 2008

I love tech. I really do. There's something about the process of adding the technical elements (as potentially laborious and frustrating as it can be) that energizes me. Even when it goes poorly, I still love the energy.

Thankfully, day one of tech weekend went off almost without a hitch. We had some discussions about the placement of set decoration (some of the actors are being overly paranoid that books and small china dogs are going to cause dresses to rip, and I find it frustrating that they won't wait until they're wearing the costumes before making bold declarations about what "can't go there", but I let it all slide), and the lights need to be refocused downstage (there is a massive dark spot just beyond the curtain line), but those were minor problems that will be cleared up by Sunday night.

We're having some issues with the slide projectors, unfortunately. The paintings are very difficult to see because of the bounce coming from the floor and the lights aimed upstage. If we turn the lights down, then it's too dark upstage, so that solution didn't work. Stephania is going to try and darken the images on the computer, as well as put a darker glaze on the floor, which will (we hope) make things better.

More problematic, however, is the sound design, which I feel is a bit of a mess at the moment. Even after having a number of meetings/discussions about what we think the design should be, my design team still brought me tracks that were inappropriate (including one or two that I had outright said "no" to before this weekend): too electronic, too baroque, or too modern. I thought that maybe I hadn't been communicating effectively, but some of the music they have is very good, but when I ask for more of it, I'm presented with something else entirely. As it stands after today the design is a mish-mash, and there's no cohesion to it. It probably isn't as big a deal as I'm making it out to be, and the fact that the other design elements are further along likely makes the sound design's lagging look more grievous than it actually is, but I need something to stew over, don't I?

Sound aside, the day went great. The crew and actors were on the ball, and we finished the cue to cue before 8:00, so everyone went home early. I have come to a personal realization, though, that I have to learn to be more patient during tech (which I think I am). I want everything right away, and once we have an element I have an unrealistic expectation that it should be integrated without a hitch. This, I realize is completely unrealistic, but my desire to play with all the "toys", as they are, sometimes gets the better of me. I also need to learn that things such as scene transitions also take time to settle – especially with crew that has only been around for two days – and that they will get faster over time, but constant running and re-running of them isn't going to make that

process happen any faster. I was pretty good today I think (read: hope), but I know that on one or two occasions we probably ran a transition a time (or two) more than necessary due to my insane desire to see immediate progress. It's strange to go from a rehearsal situation where you feel you have absolute control over the process to one that is so dependant on others. A lot of control is in the hands of the actors, granted, but I know them and we've been collaborating for almost nine weeks now. To hand over all sorts of control to someone I just met while all that's going through my head is "don't let that first-year fuck up my show" is more difficult.

Sunday, February 03, 2008

Today was, thankfully, another relatively smooth day of technical rehearsals (as smooth as they can be, I suppose). We had the chance to get two full runs in, and even finished our first – the "tech dress" I think it's officially called – over an hour ahead of schedule. We weren't able to push the second run up, unfortunately, because there were too many people potentially attending to get in touch with about the schedule change. Nevertheless, we made it out of the weekend alive.

Each of the tech elements made steps forward today, as the dark spots in the light plot, while not completely gone, are starting to disappear (Kristen tells me she's going to need a bit more time with a couple, as it's more complicated than a refocus, but they should be all to mostly gone by Monday night), the costumes, even though there is still more to come, look gorgeous (Shaun's (Ariste), as Stephen Heatley rightly pointed out, needs a bit of colour variety as he looks a bit like a big green sea-monster), and the set is really starting to settle (debates about pink vs. blue quills and proper usage of ink pots aside). Even the sound took a step – albeit a small one (am I just being snarky?) – forward, as now I'm starting to hear some coherence, as the designers want to introduce the modern elements slowly, and build them through the show. I'm not sure if I'm sold on it yet – part of me wants to hear that guitar right off the top – but I'll need to hear it again tomorrow, when we'll also have a couple of new tracks to test out early in the show (everything from intermission on I feel is working as it should).

We ran into a snag at the end of the night, though, when Stephania told me at the end of the night that she thinks we should change the slides from paintings to engravings. Her advisor said the paintings weren't working, but she had difficulty articulating why (she was upset, and I didn't want to push her). It may be for the best, since even with all the previously mentioned tinkering to the images and the floor, the paintings were still too washed out to be very effective. Stephania is going to work on the new images tonight and have something to show me tomorrow before the dress rehearsal.

As for the runs themselves (almost forgot about those, didn't you?), they went very well. The day's first run through went smooth enough that the cast was able to focus on acting in the evening run. There was a bit of silliness around moustaches and wigs and the like, but for the most part they were able to stay focused. The women, especially, are using the costumes and wigs to great advantage in terms of movement and style, while still

telling the story. It's nice to see. I'm looking forward to having an audience in two (gasp!) days.

Monday, February 04, 2008

Today was most notable for the slide issues we had. Stephania spent a bunch of time putting together new images, but when it came time to show them to the actors, neither she nor her assistant were around, so no one had any ideas which slides were to be placed where. This proved endlessly frustrating because the actors, on my advice, memorized which slides were "theirs", so when using the remote they would just click until the appropriate slide came up (this allowed us leeway to add or remove any "filler" slides without having to go through a show-and-tell every day); but because no one was there to let us know whose slide was whose, chaos reigned. So I got ticked off and left in a huff, which I really shouldn't have done in front of the actors, but I clearly wasn't thinking.

The slides look great, however. I really liked the paintings, but something about the simplicity of the engravings (and the way Stephania recoloured each of them in simple blue/pink/yellow tones) works much better with the set. Plus, we can *see* each of them clearly, so their impact is greater than that of the paintings.

As for the run, it was a little flat tonight. The entire cast seemed to be just going through the motions. That's all there is to say about it, really. People talk about casts and productions "needing an audience", and I'm not sure what that means or how the "need" for an audience is determined, or what the criteria are, but after seeing tonight's run, that's the explanation I came up with. It's just a feeling, I guess. There's an energy missing that an audience needs to produce. We'll see if it's there tomorrow.

Tuesday, February 05, 2008

Were there ever a lot of people here tonight. I knew there was going to be people in the house, but I thought it would be 50-75, at the most. When what looked like 200 plus came through the door I was, to say the least, shocked. And suddenly very nervous.

I made the cast do a line run before the show (the first time we've done one throughout the rehearsal process), which made me less popular than usual, but part of last night's problem – besides general flatness – was laziness with the lines, so I wanted to drill them before we had an audience. An overreaction? Maybe. But we're two days from opening, so I'm going to allow myself to have these mini panic attacks.

We also had some moustache issues before the show, as I was informed by stage management that the men were having trouble keeping them on during last night's run (why none of them told me is a mystery), and they wanted to ditch them completely. I didn't want to take it quite that far – the facial hair unifies the design and stops them from looking too much clowns; especially Gord – but it comes down to a question of design versus functionality (and I think functionality should win that fight). If, as they claim, they can't act in the 'staches (for fear of them falling off, or, in Nick's case, because it

impedes his lip movement) then we'll have to do something else. For tonight's run we tried painting a moustache on one of the men, while the other three tried attaching them at the base of the nose as opposed to from the upper lip.

The run was a complete 180 from last night's, as the audience really energized the cast. The problem they are going to face now is allowing the laughs to happen. More than once an actor cut their (or a cast mate's) laugh short by cutting in too soon. It's a tough note to give, though. On the one hand I don't want the actors milking their laughs and letting the energy drop; on the other, if they don't allow the audience time and space to laugh, they won't, and the whole thing could fall flat as well. How does one note something like that? They have a pretty good sense of where the jokes are, I know, but what about the more subtle gags? Is it something I should be pointing out? Maybe I'm still trying to hold on to that last vestige of control.

It's something they'll have to find for themselves, and I'm confident they will. But will one more performance be enough?

Wednesday, February 06, 2008

I took very few notes tonight, and I may not even give them to the actors (oh, who am I kidding? Of course I'll give them to the actors). While the show wasn't as energized as it was yesterday – and really, I didn't expect it to be – it was still a very solid performance, with, one minor slide cue aside, no technical difficulties. We also settled on the last of the music cues (the transition from Scene 1-2 had been proving difficult), and while I wish we had more time to really work the sound, I'm happy with where it's landed (and that we were able to move it so far in what was, compared to the other designs, a very short period).

I wish I had more to say about the actual performance, but I was definitely guilty of watching the house more than I was watching the stage (I was very good at watching the actual play last night). I'm okay with that, though. It's a good show. I'm proud of it and of the work they've done. What interests me now is seeing how the play evolves over the next ten days.

Thursday, February 07, 2008

Opening night.

Thank-yous, hugs, cards, bottles of booze. Not the best night to evaluate the show, admittedly, but I really felt that everything took a big step up tonight. There was a drive – especially in the early going – that the play didn't have prior to tonight. It was great to see.

Tonight was also the first time I got to really watch the play. No notebook. It was a liberating experience, for sure. I noticed things, little things, I'd never seen before (because my face was buried in my notebook or because I was looking somewhere else or

because it was new I'll never know): stolen moments between characters, interactions with props, the list goes on. But what I really noticed was the movement of the actors. I'm not usually one to excessively praise himself (more of a fan of self-depreciation), but the play was very well blocked, something I only came to realize after opening (I was always happy with the majority of the staging, but hadn't taken the step back until tonight).

Still, I plan on seeing the show twice more before it closes, and as I wrote yesterday, I'll be interested in seeing how it holds together. Even tonight there was a moment or two that snuck in. Hopefully it won't become some sort of game among the actors.

Now: to sleep.

Saturday, February 09, 2008

I didn't expect to go to the show tonight, but I had to go to the library to grab some books, and I ended up staying longer than I thought I would. Since it was almost 7:15 by the time I was set to leave, I thought "what the fuck?" and decided to head over to the theatre.

The show is starting to get a bit loose, however. Like Thursday, the actors are starting to take some liberties: adding sighs, groans, and growls, which puts a bit too much air in some of the sequences (especially in Act 3). I chose not to give any notes, since I didn't want to seem like I was babysitting them. I did mention to Michelle, though, that those are the sorts of notes she should be giving to the actors during the run. I'll be attending again on Monday night (when my parent's are in town to see the show), and not again until closing. If the show isn't tighter, then I'll give some notes (since it will be my last chance).

Monday, February 11, 2008

I was not happy with the show this evening. The actors are becoming, in my opinion, way too schtick, and it's starting to hurt the pace and momentum of the play. Extra "punctuation" – coughs, laughs, sighs, groans, "hums", growls – is being added and, like Saturday night's performance, there's too much extra space. Additionally, the collective IQ of the Learned Ladies seems to be dropping with each successive performance. They're not dumb characters, and I definitely don't want them perceived that way.

I gave these notes to Michelle to pass on to the actors. Hopefully they'll stick for the remainder of the run.

Saturday, February 16, 2008

It's done.

CHAPTER FOUR – Reflection

From play selection to preparation to auditions to rehearsal to tech to production, my impressions and attitudes toward *The Learned Ladies* changed in two significant ways.

First, as evidenced in my writing throughout Chapters 2 and (to some extent) 3, initially I believed the play revolved primarily around character. The strength with which Molière wrote each of the principal (as well as the supporting) cast, combined with the strong impressions I had based on their commedia roots, led me to surmise the play's "emphatic element" was indeed character. As we moved deeper into rehearsals, however, it quickly became clear to me that character was not the emphatic element of the play. Plot was. In my initial readings I dismissed the plot as being secondary – "does anyone believe that the result is ever really in doubt?" I wrote in Chapter 2 – but regardless of the audience's expectation of the outcome (and while I still contend the "happy ending" for Henriette and Clitandre isn't meant to come as a surprise; we're doing a comedy, after all) it soon became clear that a proper handling of the plot and its various twists was the most important element on which I should focus. Character was, clearly, still important, but in order for the play to be truly successful I needed to spend more time ensuring the paradoxically thin-yet-complex plot was clear.

What I missed in my early analysis of the text was how carefully Molière constructed the plot of *The Learned Ladies*. The playwright peppers his play – especially the early scenes – with important exposition, some of which does not pay off until Act 3, and the method by which he constructs the story – a slow reveal of information here and there throughout the first two acts – is deceptively complex. And while some scenes may appear to be character/gag based (Act 1, Scene 4, for example), their purpose in forwarding the action shouldn't be overlooked (as in 1.4, which sets up Bélise's "opposition" to the Henriette/Clitandre marriage as well as Clitandre's need to find allies in the household). And while my initial instinct was to "put the characters in the same room and watch how they interact," this method did a disservice to Molière's meticulous plotting. My inability to effectively convey the forward action – not to mention the story – of the play in early rehearsals made it clear I would need to shift my attention from primarily character-based to plot-based.

The other major change in my original thinking surrounds the play's language and, specifically, its rhyme scheme. When I first read Richard Wilbur's translation one of its major attractions was the translator's handling of the rhyme. I wanted a text that was faithful to Molière's original, and therefore sought out a verse translation. However, I felt that an over-emphasis of the rhyme would be difficult for the audience to handle, and while the rhyming couplets in Wilbur's translation are very present, I believed one could de-emphasize them, allowing for a more naturalistic sounding speech. As far into the process as the first rehearsal, when actors asked me how much they should concentrate on emphasizing the rhymes, I told them not to worry about the rhymes as we'd "probably be de-emphasizing them anyway."

But as rehearsals progressed, it became (very) clear that an emphasis on the couplets was absolutely necessary for the play to work. Not only does the rhyme push the text forward, it is arguably also the most important element in establishing the world of the play, and lends *The Learned Ladies* its theatricality. While I wanted to shy away from the rhymes because I felt they may be too jarring for the audience, they are such an integral part of the play's style that without them the text falls flat (it's embarrassing, actually, to think that I wanted to downplay the couplets). What surprises me most about this revelation, however, was that I didn't come to it sooner. When I saw *Dying to Be Sick* (a new translation/adaptation of *Le Malade Imaginaire*) at the National Arts Centre in November 2007, I wrote there "was no music to the language" and the main reason was due to the lack of a rhyme scheme in the new translation. Still, I let my head get in the way too much and stubbornly stuck to my not-so-rhyme-y approach. But as soon as some of the actors began to instinctively use the verse to their advantage it became clear that I was (very) wrong. Not only did using the rhyme give the play a drive and energy, it was also integral to the style, helping – as stated – create a uniquely theatrical world.

All this is not to say, however, that my perception of *The Learned Ladies* changed in these ways only. The role of Armande – her importance to the action – was another part of my thinking that went through a radical overhaul through the process. In my initial readings of the play Armande was a complete mystery to me, and I was stumped not only about her role in the play but also what I would do with her (even through auditions I was somewhat panicked about the character: how would I cast the role if I didn't know what I wanted from it?). I saw her as nothing more than a sounding board off which Molière could bounce exposition and a poor substitute for her mother in scenes without Philaminte. I completely ignored (or, you could say, missed) the Armande/Henriette/Clitandre love triangle and its implications in establishing the rivalry between the sisters, as well as the conflicting desires within her character: the need to please her mother's educational aspirations versus the traditional domestic happiness she pretends to reject. And while I still believe that Molière ignores the character at the end of the play – her disappearance and lack of action after promising Clitandre she would "do all she can" for him and Henriette is puzzling – Armande could not be more important in driving the plot, constantly interfering in the Henriette/Clitandre relationship, relaying critical information back to Philaminte, and attempting to win her former love-interest back.

As with Armande, it was only by working through the process that other questions I had previously been unable to sufficiently answer (to my own satisfaction, at the very least) began to clarify. During my preparation period I was concerned about not being able to answer the questions "what do I want the audience experience to be?" and "what is the story I am trying to tell?" among others, and was forcing myself to answer questions I was not ready to answer. It caused a fair bit of anxiety, at its worst having me feel like I may not be able to direct the play because I didn't know *exactly* what I wanted the audience's experience to be. Clearly, that wasn't the case, and it was a great lesson in preparation for me: I don't need to know it all, but I need to know what I know and I need to know what I don't know.

It may have been my process, however, that changed the most. Before rehearsals began I made a conscious choice to have a more open and “playful” rehearsal room. I didn’t want to make decisions for actors – I barely wanted to make suggestions, though that too changed (and it was for the better) – and this was a position I hadn’t previously put myself in. During my two years at UBC I had been working toward it, using each of my projects as an opportunity to take another step back from the “over directing” I could have been accused of previous to my enrollment in the MFA program. Admittedly, it was difficult to give up control early on in the process, as was keeping quiet when I normally would not have, but the idea of letting the actors edit out their own weaker choices for stronger ones was successful. By resisting the urge to “fix” what I perceived as problems in the early (i.e. low stakes) part of the rehearsal process the actors felt free to create throughout the process, knowing their work would not automatically suffer from directorial veto. This paid off greatly as we approached (and worked through) technical rehearsals, allowing me to focus on the technical elements as they were added, confident that the actors wouldn’t suffer from a little less attention.

My personal process also changed in another significant way. In the past (and present, to some extent) I have become too focused on specific moments, oftentimes ignoring the play’s bigger picture in favour of the smaller one. With *The Learned Ladies*, however, I was able to reign myself in and start with the bigger picture (story, stakes, obstacles, triggers) before giving myself permission to move on to the minutiae of the production. As stated above, this was jarring at first, ignoring my impulse to jump in and “fix” a moment that, at that particular point in the process, didn’t require fixing.

This change in my early process, however, also affected later rehearsals. With the play’s big picture clear for the cast (save one or two of the tricky scenes mentioned in Chapter 3), the transition to working on more intimate moments came naturally – the feeling of being lost in the minutiae of the play never rearing its head. It allowed us an extremely clear focus, as both the cast and myself could feel the play’s holes. Because of this, the process of stepping back from the piece as we approached technical rehearsals became easier. Generally, I find letting go of the play one of the most difficult parts of the directing process: judging when to begin backing off as well as being willing to give over control to the actors and stage management is not one of my strengths as a director (thanks to my control-freak tendencies), but because the company had been having such a fun (not to mention successful) time playing during rehearsals, and since we were also able to achieve clarity of action early on, I not only felt comfortable handing the show over to them, I looked forward to what they would do with more freedom (and would continually be impressed, especially with Maura and Aslam, who both seemed to never stop creating).

The process behind *The Learned Ladies* was a culmination of my two years at the University of British Columbia. I pushed myself further in terms of both craft and artistry than I had in not only my previous UBC productions, but in anything I had directed. By allowing myself to take risks with my process – and on more than one occasion scaring myself – the production was better served, becoming not “my” *Learned Ladies*, but a true collaboration.

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APPENDIX A: Production Credits

The University of British Columbia
Department of Theatre and Film presents:

The Learned Ladies

by Molière
translated by Richard Wilbur

February 7 to 16, 2008 – Frederic Wood Theatre

Director	Patrick Gauthier
Set Designer	Stephania Schwartz
Costume Designer	Carmen Alatorre
Lighting Designer	Kristin Robinson
Sound Designers	Craig Alfredson
	Patrick Caracas
	James Chen
Stage Manager	Michelle (Young-Bin) Ha

CAST

Chrysale	Gord Myren
Philaminte	Maura Halloran
Armande	Maryanne Renzetti
Henriette	Courtney Lancaster
Ariste	Shaun Aquiline
Bélise	Kate Hilderman
Clitandre	Aslam Husain
Trissotin	Nick Fontaine
Vadius / A Notary	Jeff Kaiser

Martine Yoshie Bancroft

Lépine / Julien Michael Neale

PRODUCTION

Director Patrick Gauthier

Directing Advisor Stephen Heatley

Production Manager Jay Henrickson

Stage Manager Michelle (Young-Bin) Ha

Assistant Stage Managers Tim Bellefleur
Benjamin Cheung
Annie Jang

Stage Management Advisor Bob Eberle

Technical Director Jim Fergusson

Assistant Technical Director Daniel Jang

Set Designer Stephania Schwartz

Set Advisor Ronald Fedoruk

Assistant Set Designer Irena Hoti

Lighting Designer Kristin Robinson

Lighting Design Advisor Ronald Fedoruk

Assistant Lighting Designer Jason Ho

Lighting Operator Ryan Warden

Lighting Crew Daniel Jang
Hana Johnson
Chris Littman
Ryan Warden
Wladimiro Woyno

Costume Designer Carmen Alatorre

Assistant Costume Designers Chantelle Balfour
Olena Dubova
Jessica Jeffery

Sound Designers Craig Alfredson
Patrick Caracas
James Chen

Sound Operator Sally Song

Wardrobe Supervisor Jean Driscoll-Bell

Costume Cutter Charlotte Burke

Costume Assistants Candice Barrans
Esther Chen
Shira Elias
Jessica Jeffery
Minah Lee
Jin Qin
Sally Song

Properties Supervisors Janet Bickford
Lynn Burton

Properties Builders Chap Chan
Esther Chen
Julian Darius
Rob Higgins
Amanda Larder
Laura McLean
Lisa Rosenberg

Props Crew Chief Jin Qin

Scenic Artist Lorraine West

Scenic Painters Amanda Larder
Stephania Schwartz
Stacey Sherlock

Crew Madeleine Copp
Emily Hartig
Min-Kyung Kang

Projections Design Stephania Schwartz
Projections Formatting Irena Hoti
Projectionist Christina Istrate
Dressers Chantelle Balfour
 Zoe Green
 Basha Ladovsky
 Laura McLean
Makeup Consultant Jill Wyness
Makeup Team Leader Jessica Jeffery
Makeup & Wig Assistant Sara Martens
Hair & Wig Stylist Jill Wyness
Publicist Deb Pickman
Production Website Linda Fenton Malloy
Production Poster Design & Harry Bardal Graphics
 Illustration

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APPENDIX B: Director's Notes

*“If the business of comedy is to correct the vices of men by entertaining them,
I don’t see why there should be any exceptions.”*

– Molière

Why?

In about February of last year everyone I knew changed, suddenly, into unrelenting eight year olds.

Why?

Again and again. Over and over.

Why?

Friends, family, acquaintances.

Why?

And, to a person, their question was the same.

Why did I want – why did I choose – to direct *The Learned Ladies*?

The mob, unfortunately, would not accept “because Molière really pumps my nads” as an answer. It wanted something profound. Something deeply meaningful. Maybe something metaphorical.

I would try to explain, try to slow down, try to articulate, try to avoid sweeping generalizations, try to describe, try to listen, try to finish a sentence without “I take that back” – I would try, but I would not be able to properly communicate.

Why?

I was first exposed to Molière during the first year of my undergraduate degree, when I was forced (how terrible it seemed at the time) to see the National Arts Centre/Soulpepper Theatre co-production of *The School for Wives* (translated by Richard Wilbur). And because I was an “if-it’s-not-alternative-theatre-I’m-not-interested” type of first-year theatre student, I hated it: it was too long, it was a period piece, and it was written in rhyme. Couplets! Why would anyone want to watch that?

The next year, however, the NAC presented a reading of another Molière piece (again, translated by Richard Wilbur): *The Learned Ladies*. I don't remember much about the performance (except for the scarf Marti Maraden wore, reading the role of Bélise. It was thin and long and didn't look very warm), but I do remember a sudden change of attitude (I was a very pragmatic second-year theatre student), thinking after the reading, "I should read more of this Molière (translated by Richard Wilbur)."

Years later – which would be roughly seventeen months ago if you're reading this in February 2008; if it's past that date, you'll have to do your own math – in a flurry of play reading, I would (re)discover *The Learned Ladies* (I won't bore you with the details, but I had to go to two libraries), and after weeks and weeks of reading and dozens and dozens of plays that were becoming more indistinguishable which each play I read, something finally clicked.

Why?

It was funny. It was theatrical. It was ironic. It was subversive. It was bitingly satirical. It was a period piece written in rhyming couplets (first-year theatre me was spinning in his grave!). It was now the only play I could think about.

Why?

It's a play about hypocrisy, feminism, art, and relationships. It's about a woman trying to drag her household into the future while her husband desperately clings to the past. It's about an opportunistic pedant – as slick and as captivating as any politician, twenty-four hour news channel, or movie star – taking advantage of her good nature.

The men are possessive and petulant, the women naïve, the children disobedient, the poets self-obsessed.

They lie, cheat, steal, spy, threaten, and conspire – usually two or more at a time – and they enjoy it. These aren't people I would invite over to my apartment, but I did choose to hang out with them a few nights a week, and I hope you enjoy your one.

Why?

A hundred reasons that are constantly changing: yesterday, it was the play's subversive sexuality. The day before, it was Wilbur's brilliant translation. Tomorrow, it might be the characters. Today, the satire.

Or, it could be that first time I read the play when, suddenly, I had to stop reading and double underline the text (forever scarring a library book). This was something very important. This was something I wanted everyone to know.

*We've many pseudo-wits and polished frauds
Whose cleverness the time's bad taste applauds*

As true today as it was 336 years ago (again: you may have to do your own math).

That's why. Today, at least.

APPENDIX C: Preliminary Set Sketch



APPENDIX D: Preliminary Costume Sketches



Philaminte
(Maura Halloran)



Henriette
(Courtney Lancaster)



Armande
(Maryanne Renzetti)



Chrysale
(Gord Myren)



Clitandre
(Aslam Husain)



Ariste
(Shaun Aquiline)



Trissotin
(Nick Fontaine)



Martine
(Yoshie Bancroft)



Lépine
michael
neale

Lépine
(Michael Neale)



Vadius / A Notary
(Jeff Kaiser)

APPENDIX E: Production Photos



Act 1, Scene 1

Henriette (Courtney Lancaster), Armande (Maryanne Renzetti)



Act 1, Scene 3
Henriette (Courtney Lancaster), Clitandre (Aslam Husain)



Act 1, Scene 4
Bélise (Kate Hilderman), Clitandre (Aslam Husain)



Act 2, Scene 3

Ariste (Shaun Aquiline), Bélise (Kate Hilderman), Chrysale (Gord Myren)



Act 2, Scene 5

Martine (Yoshie Bancroft), Philaminte (Maura Halloran)



Act 3, Scene 2

Philaminte (Maura Halloran), Bélise (Kate Hilderman), Armande (Maryanne Renzetti), Henriette (Courtney Lancaster)



Act 3, Scene 2

Trissotin (Nick Fontaine), Armande (Maryanne Renzetti), Bélise (Kate Hilderman), Henriette (Courtney Lancaster), Philaminte (Maura Halloran)



Act 4, Scene 2

Philaminte (Maura Halloran), Clitandre (Aslam Husain), Armande (Maryanne Renzetti)



Act 4, Scene 3

Armande (Maryanne Renzetti), Julien (Michael Neale), Clitandre (Aslam Husain), Trissotin (Nick Fontaine)



Act 4, Scene 7
Clitandre (Aslam Husain), Henriette (Courtney Lancaster)



Act 5, Scene 1
Henriette (Courtney Lancaster), Trissotin (Nick Fontaine)



Act 5, Scene 3

Philaminte (Maura Halloran), Chrysale (Gord Myren)



Act 5, Scene 3
The Notary (Jeff Kaiser)



Act 5, Scene 3
Martine (Yoshie Bancroft), Trissotin (Nick Fontaine)