

MOLIÈRE'S  
THE  
**IMAGINARY  
INVALID**

ADAPTED BY CONSTANCE CONGDON  
BASED ON A NEW TRANSLATION BY DAN SMITH

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Alicia Green  
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION



Pictured: Deborah Strang, *The Tempest*, 2014. PHOTO BY CRAIG SCHWARTZ.

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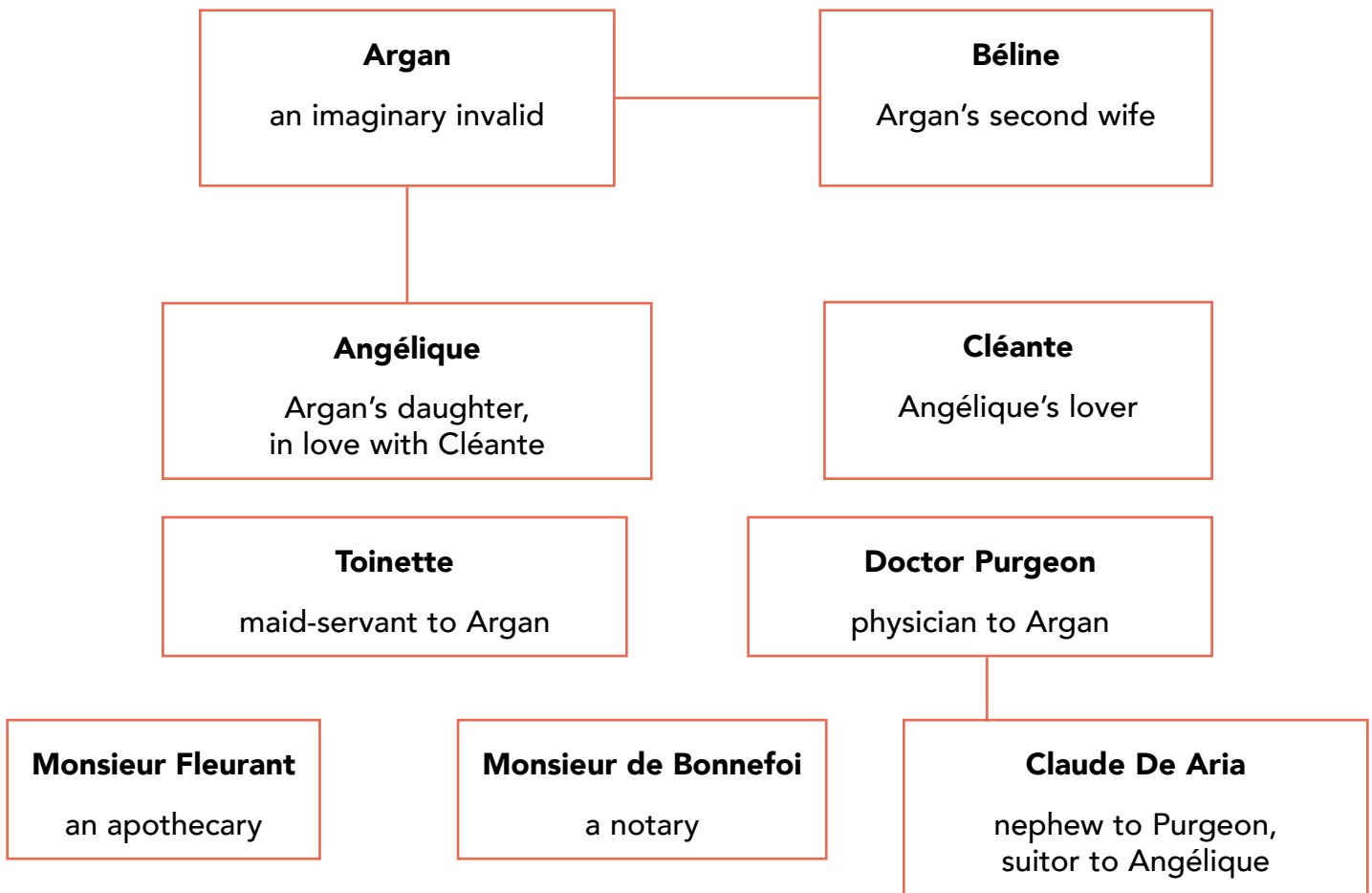


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# Character List



## NOTES ON CHARACTER NAMES IN *THE IMAGINARY INVALID*:

**Argan's** name sounds a little like "argent," which [in French] means "money." It also sounds a bit like "Orgon," a character from another of Molière's plays whose faith in the titular character, Tartuffe, is comparable to Argan's faith in doctors.

**Béline's** name is loosely related to "bélier," which means "sheep." The main reason for such a connection would be that she is pulling the wool over Argan's eyes. There were a number of similar French expressions involving wool in this period. A "tireur de laine" (wool-puller) was akin to a con artist.

**Angélique** has a romantic-sounding name, and the direct translation of her name is "angelic."

**Cléante** was a typical name for comedy in Molière's era.

**Monsieur de Bonnefoi's** name means "Good Faith," which is the opposite of his personality, just as Monsieur Loyal in *Tartuffe* is far from Loyal

**Toinette** is fairly close to "tinette," which means "funnel," and to "toilette," which may relate to her duties toward Angélique.

**Monsieur Purgeon** likes to purge, which still comes across in English.

**Monsieur Fleurant's** name is derived from the verb "fleurer," "to give off an odor." [This is] less about him having body odor and more about sticking his nose into chamber-pots to examine bowel movements.

**Diafoirus** has a Greek beginning (Dia, meaning "through"), a Latin ending (-us), and diarrhea in the middle. The verb "foirer," means "to have diarrhea." [Editor's note: adapted to "**Claude De Aria**" in this version, which sounds like "diarrhea."]

Edited from: Smith, Dan (2006). *Le Malade Imaginaire, Literal translation with notes*. Reproduced with permission from Dan Smith.

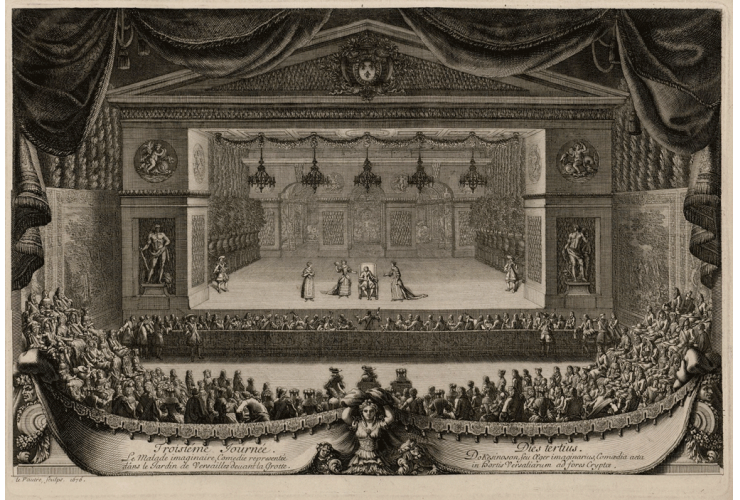
# Synopsis

**ARGAN**, the eponymous *Imaginary Invalid*, believes that he is constantly afflicted with a variety of diseases and illnesses. He devises a plan to secure constant medical attention for himself by arranging a marriage between his daughter, Angélique, and the nephew of his doctor, Claude De Aria, (who also happens to be a doctor). Unfortunately for Argan, Angélique has already fallen madly in love with another young man: Cléante. When she hears the news of her father's plan, she is devastated.

Meanwhile, Béline, Argan's second wife, is angered at the prospect of having to pay a dowry for Angélique, as Béline only married Argan for his money. Béline decides to plot with the notary, Monsieur de Bonnefoi, to scam Argan into willing his entire estate to her. However, Toinette, Argan's maid, is wise to Béline's deceitful intentions and warns Angélique of the scheme. Toinette also disagrees with Argan's mandate that Angélique should marry Claude De Aria and agrees to help Angélique undermine her father's selfish marriage arrangement. Cléante then arrives at Angélique's house and Toinette helps disguise him as Angélique's music teacher.

Later that same day, Argan's doctor Purgeon brings his nephew – the awkward, chicken-like Claude De Aria—to meet Angélique. Cléante tells Argan that he is a substitute for Angélique's music teacher, who has fallen ill. However, rather than allowing Cléante and Angélique a private music lesson, Argan insists that everyone be allowed to watch the lesson from this substitute music teacher. Cléante, who has just discovered that Angélique's hand in marriage has been promised to another man, wants desperately to learn her true feelings for him. Under the guise of the public "music lesson," he and Angélique improvise an "opera" in which they tell the story of how they met and use the opportunity to declare their love for one another. Once Cléante leaves, Argan insists Angélique consent to marry Claude De Aria immediately. When Angélique refuses this command, Claude is outraged and Argan is devastated. Purgeon uses the opportunity to enlist Claude to perform his diagnosis of Argan. While Claude pronounces Argan as dead (though he is very clearly alive and still participating in the action of the scene), Béline goads Claude by whispering to him intermittently about how disappointing a wife Angélique will be.

Meanwhile, Angélique is devastated and begs Toinette to help her avoid being forced to marry the despicable Claude De Aria. Toinette devises a plan in which Angélique will fake an illness and call for a "doctor" other than Purgeon to treat her. At the same time, Béline proclaims that Argan



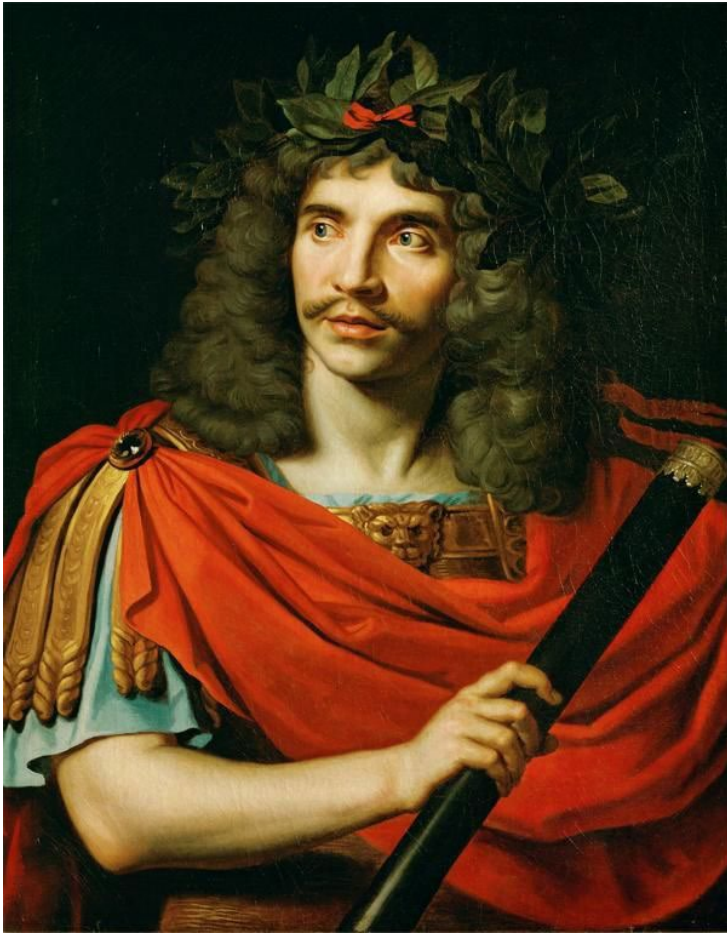
A remount of *The Imaginary Invalid* in 1674

is well enough not to receive any more enemas. This news infuriates the apothecary, Monsieur Bonnefoi, who has just arrived to administer Argan's enema. When Purgeon hears that a different doctor will be attending Argan and that he has rejected Bonnefoi (who works for Purgeon), he is outraged and affronted by Argan's perceived disloyalty and leaves him forever. Argan demands to see the "new doctor" (who is really Toinette in disguise!), who "cures" him by recommending dismemberment, thus shaking Argan's faith in the medical world.

Toinette then begins the second part of her plan, aiming to prove to Argan that Béline only loves him for his money. Toinette convinces Argan to pretend to be dead, to test Béline's reaction. When Béline learns of his "death," she dances for joy, revealing her nature to Argan. Argan bemoans his wife's disloyalty and laments that no one in the world loves him. In order to prove him wrong, Toinette convinces him to play dead again, and this time to let Angélique discover him. When she does, she is heartbroken, to the point of not wanting to marry Cléante out of sorrow for her father. Realizing his follies, Argan gets up and reconciles with his daughter, granting her permission to marry Cléante, on one condition: that he become a doctor. Cléante and Angélique do not want to wait until Cléante becomes a doctor to get married. Toinette, saving the day one last time, suggests that Argan become a doctor himself. Argan takes to the idea and is initiated into the medical world in an elaborate ceremony.

♦  
Edited from *The Guide: A Theatregoer's Resource: The Imaginary Invalid*. Portland Center Stage. 2010.

# Playwright Biography: Molière



Portrait of Molière by Nicolas Mignard



La Troupe de Molière.

**MOLIÈRE** was the stage name of Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, born in 1622, to a prosperous Parisian upholsterer. At the age of 21, Jean-Baptiste left the family business and abandoned his legal studies and birth name to take up a career in the theater. His first appearances on stage were with the Illustre Théâtre, a young ensemble whose fortunes soon faltered. After a brief stint in debtors' prison, Molière rededicated himself to a life in the theater. He spent most of the next fifteen years touring the provinces, honing his skills as a comic actor and playwright, and turning out a number of farces inspired by the Italian *commedia dell'arte* troupes he encountered in his travels.

Molière returned to Paris in 1658 as manager of the Illustre Théâtre. Invited to perform before Louis XIV, the company quickly won his favor, and Molière was granted the use of the Petit Bourbon (a court theater adjacent to the Louvre) and later the Palais-Royal for the troupe's farces, character comedies, and lavish court entertainments. In 1662, Molière married Armande Béjart (the younger sister—or the daughter, some insinuated—of his mistress), who became a leading actress in his company.

Not all of Molière's plays were unqualified successes, however, and not even the patronage of Louis XIV could protect him from the censors provoked by *Tartuffe* (1664). Its story of a pious hypocrite and his willing dupe was interpreted by many as a condemnation of religion, and five years elapsed before the play, in modified form, passed official muster.

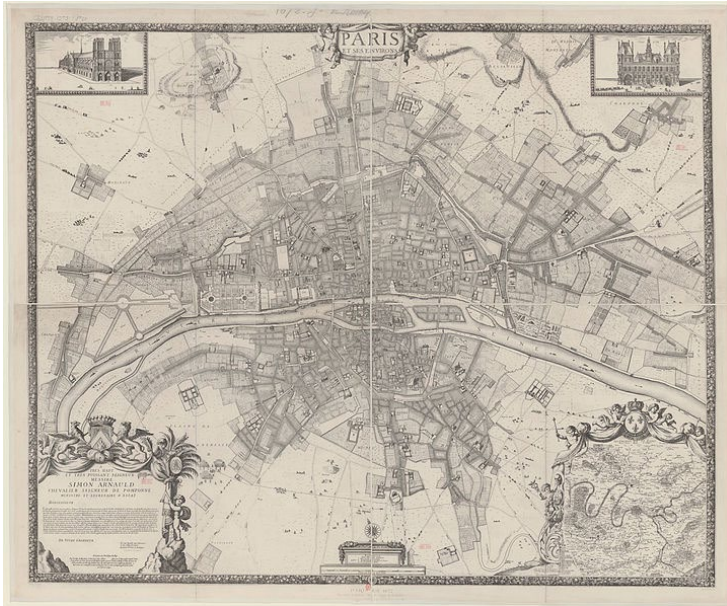
Molière fared little better with *Don Juan* (1665): its free-thinking title character incurred the wrath of the censors immediately after opening night and the play soon disappeared from the repertoire. Still, by 1665, Molière's company was awarded regular pensions from the crown, and took the title of *La Troupe du Roi*. *The Misanthrope* and *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* premiered a year later, followed by *The Miser* (1668) and *The Learned Ladies* (1672).

Molière's next play, *The Imaginary Invalid* (1673), which featured the playwright as a grouching hypochondriac, was to be his last. Molière, who suffered from tuberculosis, took ill during a performance and died shortly thereafter. A Christian burial was initially denied him because he had not received last rites nor had he made a deathbed recantation of his profession in the theatre (as tradition required). But the archbishop of Paris, responding to petitions from Molière's widow, grudgingly allowed a private burial in the parish cemetery, on condition that it be carried out at night, without ceremony. ♦

Edited from Paran, J. (2007). McCarter theatre - *Tartuffe* - audience guide. Retrieved from <http://www.mccarter.org/education/tartuffe/html/3.html>.

# Molière Timeline

- 1622** — Born as Jean Baptiste Poquelin, son of a Paris upholsterer.
- 1643** — Forms the Illustre Théâtre with his mistress and actress Madeleine Béjart.
- 1644** — Jean Baptiste takes the stage name Molière.
- 1645** — Molière and Béjart flee Paris because of great financial debt, joins a troupe of touring actors.
- 1658** — Molière and Béjart return to Paris, and Molière finds a patron: the brother of King Louis XIV. Molière and his acting troupe perform for the court of Louis XIV, who becomes a patron of Molière himself.
- 1659** — *The Affected Young Ladies (Les Précieuses Ridicules)* becomes Molière's first success.
- 1662** — Molière marries Armande Béjart, the younger sister of Madeleine Béjart.
- 1662** — *The School for Wives (L'école des femmes)* premieres. The first performance causes a great scandal.



Map of Paris in 1671

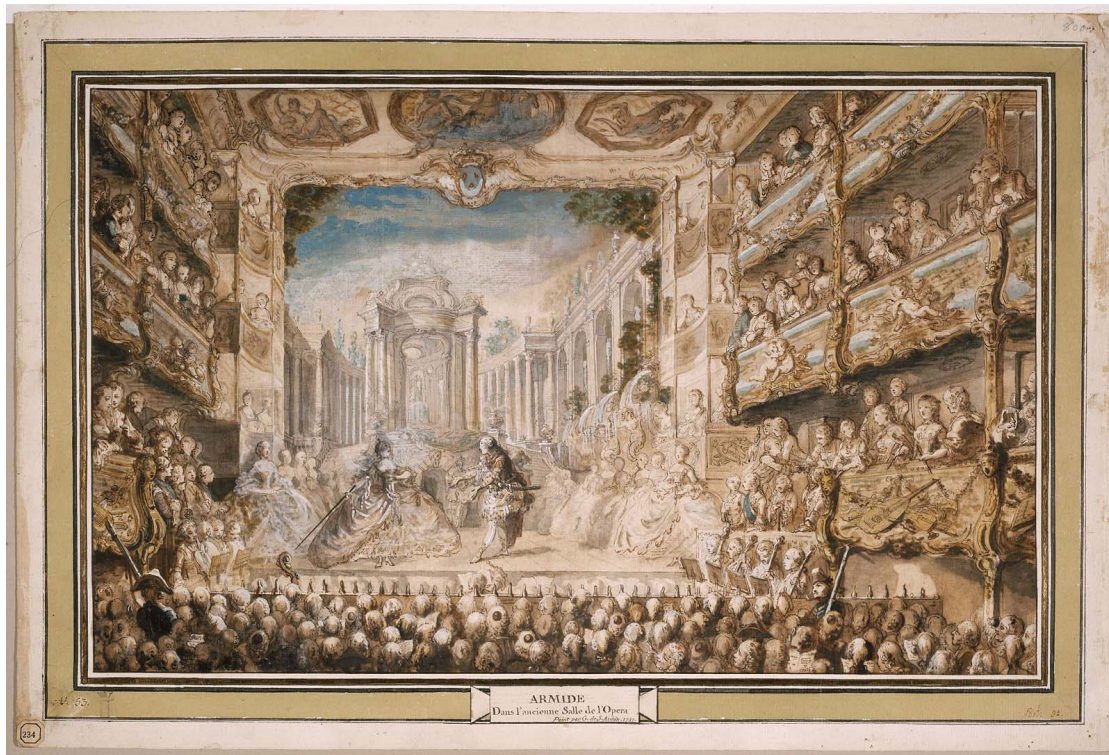
- 1664** — *Tartuffe (Le Tartuffe ou l'imposteur; Tartuffe or the Impostor)*, Molière's play which satirizes religious hypocrisy, is banned and later reissued in 5-acts in 1667 (also banned) and 1669 (current version).



Engraving of "La Malade Imaginaire"

- 1665** — Molière's theatre company is adopted by the king as *Troupe du Roi*.
- 1673** — *The Imaginary Invalid (Le Malade Imaginaire)*, Molière's last play premieres, with Molière playing the lead Argan.
- 1673** — Molière, despite increasing illness, continued to act. While performing in *The Imaginary Invalid*, he collapses onstage and dies shortly after the performance.

# Translation and Adaptation Biographies



Painting of the interior of the Théâtre du Palais-Royal where *The Imaginary Invalid* was first produced

## ADAPTOR BIOGRAPHY: CONSTANCE CONGDON

Constance Congdon has been called “one of the best playwrights our country and our language has ever produced” by playwright Tony Kushner in Kushner’s introduction to her collection *Tales of the Lost Formicans and Other Plays*. In addition to *Tales of the Lost Formicans*, which has had more than 300 productions worldwide, Congdon’s plays include: *Casanova*, *Dog Opera*, *Losing Father’s Body*, *Lips*, *Native American*, *The Children of the Elvi*, *A Mother*, and a new verse version of *The Misanthrope*. She also recently finished *Take Me to the River*, commissioned by the Denver Theater Center. Her new verse version of *Tartuffe* will be included in the next *Norton Anthology of Drama*, and is already out in a single-volume Norton Critical edition. Congdon’s adaptation of *A Servant of Two Masters* played at Yale Rep during their 2010 season, and continued to The Shakespeare Theater in D.C. and the Guthrie Theater. Her adaptation of Molière’s *The Imaginary Invalid* has been produced in several regional theaters, most recently at Portland City Stage. Congdon was just honored with an award “for distinguished service to the American theater” at the Great Plains Theater Conference. She’s an alumna of New Dramatists and a member of the Dramatists Guild and of PEN. Congdon has been teaching playwriting at Amherst College for two decades. ♦

Edited from: Constance Congdon Biography. (2014). Retrieved from Playwrights’ Center, <https://pwcenter.org/profile/constance-congdon>

## TRANSLATOR BIOGRAPHY: DAN SMITH

Dr. Daniel T. Smith Jr. is a dramaturg and theatre historian with research interests in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French theatre. After studying French Literature at the University of Notre Dame, Dan earned degrees in Theatre from the University of Massachusetts Amherst (MFA) and Northwestern University (PhD). Dan has chaired the Theatre History Focus Group of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) and has previously taught Theatre Studies courses at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Northwestern University, University of Illinois at Chicago, and The Theatre School at DePaul University. As a professional dramaturg, he has worked at numerous theatres in Chicago, and served as Associate Artistic Director/Resident Dramaturg of Caffeine Theatre from 2010-2012. Dan is also a three-time Jeopardy! champion. He has recently participated in the NEH Summer Institute on Roman Comedy in Performance (2012) and the Mellon School of Theater and Performance Research at Harvard University (2013). ♦

Edited from: Department of Theatre: Daniel Smith Jr. Michigan State University. Retrieved from <http://theatre.msu.edu/people/faculty-staff/daniel-smith-jr>

# Translation and Adaptation in *The Imaginary Invalid* | By Elyse Griffin



Argan and Toinette

The version of *The Imaginary Invalid* that *A Noise Within* is producing this season is an adaptation of Molière’s script, which was originally written in French. Dramaturg and theatre historian Dan Smith worked with playwright Constance Congdon on this adaptation. First Smith provided a literal translation of the French into English, keeping every word in English as close to the original French word as possible, noting the meanings of

the French terms and phrases in the 17<sup>th</sup> century cultural context. Congdon then adapted Smith’s translation into modern English, focusing more on the spirit or intention of the story, characters, and jokes. In an interview with the American Conservatory Theatre, she explains this process:

“When I say intention, I mean comic idea. Every beat has a comic idea behind it. There is hardly a wasted breath [in Molière’s text]. Every “mademoiselle” and “monsieur,” those kinds of things that people say to each other, is filled with something, and that is what I tried to go back to. We went through this process, starting as close as we could to the original and then cutting and reshaping, cutting and reshaping until we ended up really reformatting the play.

...If you lose sight of the original completely, then you don’t have anything. You don’t have something truly original, and you don’t have the genuine article to bounce off of. We’ve seen that happen in movies a lot. In the theater, we work with material that was written up to 4,000 years ago. We, in a sense, have to bring the playwright into the room.”

—Melcon, Margot. “Looking for the Comic Intention: An Interview with Playwright and *The Imaginary Invalid* Adaptor Constance Congdon.” *Words on Plays* (2007)

MOLIÈRE’S FRENCH	DAN SMITH’S LITERAL TRANSLATION	CONSTANCE CONGDON’S ADAPTATION
<p><b>ARGAN</b> Hé bien, c’est le neveu de Monsieur Purgon, qui est le fils de son beau-frère le médecin, Monsieur Diafoirus; et ce fils s’appelle Thomas Diafoirus, et non pas Cléante; et nous avons conclu ce mariage-là ce matin, Monsieur Purgon, Monsieur Fleurant et moi, et demain ce gendre prétendu doit m’être amené par son père. Qu’est-ce? Vous voilà toute ébaubie?</p> <p><b>ANGÉLIQUE</b> C’est, mon père, que je connais que vous avez parlé d’une personne, et que j’ai entendu une autre.</p> <p><b>TOINETTE</b> Quoi, Monsieur, vous auriez fait ce dessein burlesque? Et avec tout le bien que vous avez, vous voudriez marier votre fille avec un médecin?</p>	<p><b>ARGAN</b> Well! It’s Monsieur Purgon’s nephew, who is the son of his brother-in-law the doctor, Monsieur Diafoirus; and this son is named Thomas Diafoirus, and not Cléante. And we have agreed to this marriage this morning, Monsieur Purgon, Monsieur Fleurant, and I, and tomorrow this potential son-in-law will be brought to me by his father. What is it? You look completely shocked.</p> <p><b>ANGÉLIQUE</b> That’s because, Father, I know now that you were speaking of one person, and I was hearing about another.</p> <p><b>TOINETTE</b> What, Monsieur? How can you have made such a ridiculous plan? And, with all the wealth you have, you want to marry your daughter to a doctor?</p>	<p><b>ARGAN</b> Good. Well, Doctor Purgeon’s nephew, the son of his own dear sister, is called Claude, Claude de Aria, and not Cléante or whatever you said. And he is coming here today to meet you. What’s the matter? You look upset.</p> <p><i>(ANGÉLIQUE screams and exits)</i></p> <p><b>TOINETTE</b> <i>(Can’t stand it any longer,—has to chime in, thereby revealing herself)</i> Sir, I can’t believe this. You just came up with this insane idea?</p>

# The Imaginary Invalid: Themes | By Elyse Griffin

## GULLIBILITY

Argan is easily fooled; he accepts without question any information so long as it is in line with his own desires, fears, and vanity. He accepts Dr. Purgeon's quack cures and believes that Béline truly loves him, without questioning for a moment that both of them may just be after his money. It is by expertly exploiting his gullibility, however, that Toinette is able to reveal to Argan how he has been taken advantage of and, ultimately, save the day.



"The Doctor's Visit" by Jan Steen

## OPPOSITION TO PROGRESS

Dr. Purgeon and Claude de Aria reject seventeenth-century medical advances and instead cling to ancient ideas of the body and methods of treating patients. They even reject English physician William Harvey's discovery in 1628 of the circulation of blood in one direction throughout the body. "Like me," Purgeon says in praise of his son, "he is attached to the ideas of the ancients with a kind of unquestioning loyalty one sees in priests, and some dogs, keeping his medical knowledge unsullied by the pretended discoveries of our centuries concerning the circulation of blood and other opinions that smack of scientific thought."



"La Malade Imaginaire" by Charles Robert Leslie

## GREED

Purgeon and Fleurant regularly charge Argan for dozens of so-called healing agents. Although it is obvious that Argan's afflictions are imaginary, his money is real, and Purgeon and Fleurant are only too willing to relieve him of it. Greed also infects Argan's wife, Béline. She pretends to love him, but she loves only his money and spends her time scheming to get it.

## QUACKERY

Quackery in the medical profession is a main target of satire by Molière in *The Imaginary Invalid*. In the next section, quackery in the context of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century is discussed further.

Edited in part from Cummings, M. (2010). *Molière's imaginary invalid: A Study Guide*. Retrieved 2016 from <http://cumingsstudyguides.net/Guides2/Imaginaire.html>.



Commedia dell'arte actors – often worked in conjunction with Molière's troupe

# Quackery and Medicine in 17th Century France

"We are doctors come to warn you  
Of the phonies out to harm you  
Could your guru be a schmuck?  
If it quacks, then it's a duck!

Your guru scoffs at your queries,  
And all his precious theories  
Won't stand up to some flack?  
If it ducks, then it's a quack!"

—Prologue, *The Imaginary Invalid*

"Quack, leave thy trade; thy dealings are not right, thou  
tak'st our weighty gold, to give us light."

—Francis Quarles,  
*Hieroglyphikes of the Life of Man*, 1638.

**THE TERM "QUACK"** refers to doctors who hawk fake remedies to patients and pretend to have special medical knowledge and skills they don't possess. But why do we call them a "quack"? The word comes from the obsolete old Dutch word "quacksalver" (kwaksalver in modern Dutch), a combination of quack (to boast) and salve (an ointment). At first, the term just meant someone who cures with home remedies, but eventually came to mean someone who peddles phony cures and treatments. In English, the word was shortened to quack, which draws an amusing comparison to the other meaning of quack: the sound a duck makes. The squawking quacks of a duck and the hawking of useless cures of the quack doctor are equally ridiculous.



Swedish actors in a scene from the play, photographer unknown

## THE HUMORS

Although there were revolutionary anatomical discoveries being made throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century, prevailing medical practices were still based on the theory of the Four Humors. The theory was that the human body contained and was controlled by four humors, or liquids: black bile, yellow bile, blood, and phlegm. Each humor corresponded to the elements (earth, fire, water, and air, respectively)

and temperaments (melancholy, choleric, sanguine, phlegmatic). Thus, if a person was unhealthy, it was thought that their humors were out of balance, likely owing to an overabundance of one humor. To restore balance and health, the overly abundant humor should be let out of the body through practices like blood-letting, purging, and enemas.

## ENEMAS, THE CLYSTER CRAZE

"The 17th century was the Golden Age of the enema, or clyster, as it was then called. The crude instruments of yesteryear—tubes of bone or wood attached to animal bladders or silk bags—were replaced by a formidable piston-&-cylinder device. An apothecary or doctor's assistant, marching through the streets with a clyster tube on his shoulder, became a common sight, as a mania for enemas swept France. Fashionable Parisians, convinced that inner lavements purified the complexion and produced good health, took as many as three or four enemas a day. The craze was often burlesqued on the stage, notably by Molière, and it was a lively topic of elegant discourse in the salons. Louis XIV had over 2,000 enemas during his reign, sometimes holding court while the ceremony progressed. Aristocratic enemas were delicately tinted and scented. They were also so widely used as a means of poisoning that Louis XIV set up a special detective agency to combat the wave of enema-murders among his nobility." (Excerpted from *"The Clyster Craze"* which originally appeared in *Time* magazine, July 1, 1946.)

## WHAT WOULD PURGEON PRESCRIBE?

- For fevers, pains in the side, blood-spitting, pleurisy: Blood-letting
- Problems with the lungs: Blood-letting followed by four good purgings
- Toothache: Blood-letting, or take some Spirit of Nicotine
- The plague: Take some nutmeg. (Or, blood-letting.)
- For tooth extraction: "First boil, then reduce to ashes, some earthworms; fill the hollow tooth with this powder, seal it in with wax, and the tooth will soon fall out."
- For pain in childbirth: Minimize the pain by placing the father's hat on the woman's belly.
- For all manner of falling evils: Take blood from the little finger of the sick man, and write the following lines, thenceforth to be worn as an amulet round his neck—*"Jasper fert Mirrham, Thus Melchior, Balthazar aurum; Haec quicunque secum portat-tria nomina regum, Salvitur a morbo, Domini pietate, caduco."*

# How To Become A Doctor

From *The Splendid Century: Life in the France of Louis XIV* | By W. H. Lewis

**TO ENTER THE FACULTY** as a student, the applicant had to be a Master of Arts, and a practicing Roman Catholic with a certificate of good conduct from his parish priest. At the end of his second year he presented himself for his preliminary examination, which lasted for three days, and is described as being “on things natural, unnatural, and contrary to nature;” after which he had to deliver an impromptu dissertation on an axiom of Hippocrates.

During the next two years the successful aspirant witnessed dissections, and once a week “sustained a thesis.” Which sounds a more severe infliction than it perhaps actually was; for we must remember that in every examination conducted by the Paris faculty, what was required was not a show of knowledge but a display of rhetoric, not a knowledge of fact but an elegant Latin style. A viva voce examination of medical students resembled rather a meeting of a tumultuous debating society than an examination, and the room rang with shouts of “Distinguo” and “I dispute your major.”

The viva voce must have been a fearsome ordeal, even for a strong young man with a natural turn for classical rhetoric, for it began at six in the morning and continued until midday. In the cold dawn the senior examiner gave out an axiom, which the candidate was apparently allowed to study until eight o’clock; from eight to eleven he had to refute the objections to it which were put forward by the board of nine examiners, and the final hour was devoted to an interrogation of the victim on some subject outside the set thesis. ♦



*The Pharmacy* by Francesco Bartolozzi



*The Imaginary Illness* by Honore Daumier

**Molière spoofs this ordeal in the absurd ceremony Argan undergoes in the final scene to become a doctor. The Latin in Argan’s examination is a jumble of phrases that mean nothing, performed with over-seriousness to highlight the ridiculousness and pomposity of the medical establishment:**

MALE CHORUS: *De gustibus non est disputandum*

FEMALE CHORUS: *Ad hominem, E pluribus unum*

ALL: *Ad nauseum, de profundis  
Ipso facto in extremis,*

*Mea culpa, magnum opus,  
In absentia habeas corpus.*

*Me trasmitte daledoni!  
Agnus dei, who’s a phony?  
Kyrie eleison we cogito  
Power can corrupt, amigo!*

ARGAN: Am I a doctor yet?

CHORUS: *Memento mori, memento mori,*

*Viva, vivat, vivamos!*

*Memento mori, memento mori,*

*Viva, vivat, vivamos!*

(ARGAN receives his “special little doctor hat”)

ARGAN: I’m a doctor!!!! At last I am a doctor!!!

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# Essay Questions and Activities

## ESSAY QUESTIONS:

1. At the end of the play, Argan himself becomes a “doctor”. What do you think that he will do with this newly acquired title? Do you believe that this will give him the ability to “feel” as though he has been cured of his illness?
2. Discuss the character Toinette. She seems to form the moral backbone of the play, in many ways, and is wise and knowing. In this play, Molière has taken characters of high class and made them foolish and stupid, whereas the characters of traditionally low class are intelligent and knowing. Discuss why Molière made this choice. What comment does he seem to be making about society writ large?
3. There is quite a bit of deception in *The Imaginary Invalid*. Who does the deceiving in the course of the play? In the case of what some characters are attempting to achieve, are the ends justified by the means?
4. Discuss the role of women in this play. How are they stereotypes of womanhood? How do they subvert these same stereotypes?

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## ACTIVITIES:

### DESIGNING THE IMAGINARY INVALID

Theatrical visual designers, such as those who create a play production’s scenery, costumes, makeup, and lights must find ways to communicate their preliminary design ideas to the director with whom they collaborate. This activity puts the student in the role of designer and allows them to go deeper in the text to justify their choices.

1. Have students create a collage for their design of *The Imaginary Invalid* by using cutout images and text, material/fabric, and other small objects glued to a piece of paper to symbolize the world of the play, its inhabitants, and/or its themes.
  - They will need poster board/paper, magazines with visual images/photographs, scissors, additional color paper for cutouts, colored pencils or paint for a background, and glue
  - Encourage students to think about how they might use color, images, and text to enhance their design
2. Students should be given time to show their finished collages to the class and to explain how the objects and images in their collages express and symbolize their design concept

### TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE

2. Have each student think of two truths about their life and then one lie about their life
3. Break students into groups of 4 or 5
4. One at a time they will share these three things with their groups, and then the rest of the group will try and decide which was the lie
5. After the game, discuss as a class how easy it was to guess the lie? If so, how? What sort of lies were the most convincing? Big lies? Little lies? Why?

### THEY DID WHAT?

To prepare your students for the play, and to deepen their level of understanding of and appreciation for the period in which it was written, have your students research, either in groups or individually, the development of the medical profession through the ages. Topics might include:

- The four humors
- Medical school
- Various treatment options
- Hypochondria

# Resources and Suggestions for Further Reading

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Interview with Playwright and *The Imaginary Invalid* Adaptor Constance Congdon." *Words on Plays* (2007): 13

Paran, J. (2007). *McCarter theatre - Tartuffe - audience guide*. Retrieved from <http://www.mccarter.org/education/tartuffe/html/3.html>.

# About Theatre Arts

## KEY THEATRICAL TERMS

Today, movies and television take audiences away from what was once the number one form of amusement: going to the theatre. But attending a live theatrical performance is still one of the most thrilling and active forms of entertainment.

In a theatre, observers are catapulted into the action, especially at an intimate venue like *A Noise Within*, whose thrust stage reaches out into the audience and whose actors can see, hear, and feel the response of the crowd.

Although playhouses in the past could sometimes be rowdy, participating in the performance by giving respect and attention to the actors is the most appropriate behavior at a theatrical performance today. Shouting out (or even whispering) can be heard throughout the auditorium, as can rustling paper or ringing phones.

After *A Noise Within's* performance of *The Imaginary Invalid*, you will have the opportunity to discuss the play's content and style with the performing artists and directors. You may wish to remind students to observe the performance carefully or to compile questions ahead of time so they are prepared to participate in the discussion.

**blocking:** The instructions a director gives his actors that tell them how and where to move in relation to each other or to the set in a particular scene.

**character:** The personality or part portrayed by an actor on stage.

**conflict:** The opposition of people or forces which causes the play's rising action.

**dramatic irony:** A dramatic technique used by a writer in which a character is unaware of something the audience knows.

**genre:** Literally, "kind" or "type." In literary terms, genre refers to the main types of literary form, principally comedy and tragedy. It can also refer to forms that are more specific to a given historical era, such as the revenge tragedy, or to more specific sub-genres of tragedy and comedy such as the comedy of manners, farce or social drama.

**motivation:** The situation or mood which initiates an action. Actors often look for their "motivation" when they try to dissect how a character thinks or acts.

**props:** Items carried on stage by an actor to represent objects mentioned in or implied by the script. Sometimes the props are actual, sometimes they are manufactured in the theatre shop.

**proscenium stage:** There is usually a front curtain on a proscenium stage. The audience views the play from the front through a "frame" called the proscenium arch. In this scenario, all audience

members have the same view of the actors.

**set:** The physical world created on stage in which the action of the play takes place.

**setting:** The environment in which a play takes place. It may include the historical period as well as the physical space.

**stage areas:** The stage is divided into areas to help the director to note where action will take place. Upstage is the area furthest from the audience. Downstage is the area closest to the audience. Center stage defines the middle of the playing space. Stage left is the actor's left as he faces the audience. Stage right is the actor's right as he faces the audience.

**theme:** The overarching message or main idea of a literary or dramatic work. A recurring idea in a play or story.

**thrust stage:** A stage that juts out into the audience seating area so that patrons are seated on three sides. In this scenario, audience members see the play from varying viewpoints. *A Noise Within* features a thrust stage.

# About A Noise Within

**A NOISE WITHIN** A Noise Within produces classic theatre as an essential means to enrich our community by embracing universal human experiences, expanding personal awareness, and challenging individual perspectives. Our company of resident and guest artists performing in rotating repertory immerses student and general audiences in timeless, epic stories in an intimate setting.

Our most successful art asks our community to question beliefs, focus on relationships, and develop self-awareness. Southern California audiences of all ages and backgrounds build community together while engaging with this most visceral and primal of storytelling techniques. ANW's production of classic theatre includes all plays we believe will be part of our cultural legacy. We interpret these stories through the work of a professional resident company—a group of artists whose work is critical to their community—based on the belief that trust among artists and between artists and audience can only be built through an honest and continuing dialogue. Our plays will be performed in rotating repertory, sometimes simultaneously in multiple spaces, and buttressed by meaningful supporting programs to create a symphonic theatrical experience for artists and audience.

In its 25 year history, A Noise Within has garnered over 500 awards and commendations, including the Los Angeles Drama Critics' Circle's revered Polly Warfield Award for Excellence and the coveted Margaret Hartford Award for Sustained Excellence.

More than 40,000 individuals attend productions at a Noise Within annually. In addition, the theatre draws over 15,000 student participants to its arts education program, *Classics Live!* Students benefit from in-classroom workshops, conservatory training, subsidized tickets to matinee and evening performances, post-performance discussions with artists, and free standards-based study guides. ♦

## Study Guides

A Noise Within creates study guides in alignment with core reading, listening, speaking, and performing arts standards to help educators prepare their students for their visit to our theatre. Study guides are available at no extra cost to download through our website: [www.anoisewithin.org](http://www.anoisewithin.org). The information and activities outlined in these guides are designed to work in compliance with the California VAPA standards, The Common Core, and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Skills.

Study guides include background information on the plays and playwrights, historical context, textual analysis, in-depth discussion of A Noise Within's artistic interpretation of the work, statements from directors and designers, as well as discussion points and suggested classroom activities. Guides from past seasons are also available to download from the website.

## Study Guide Credits

Alicia Green.....	<i>Education Director and Editor</i>
Leah Arterian .....	<i>Education Associate and Author</i>
Craig Schwartz .....	<i>Production Photography</i>
Teresa English.....	<i>Graphic Design</i>
Anna Rodil.....	<i>Operations Coordinator</i>
Elyse Griffin.....	<i>Researcher and Contributor</i>



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