

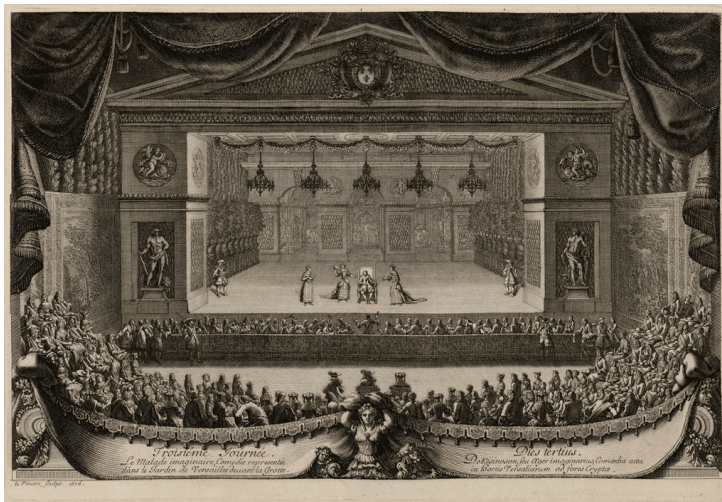
# Synopsis

**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.