

THE IMAGINARY INVALID

by Molière

Adapted by
Paul Caywood

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THE STORY

Monsieur Argan is an imaginary invalid -- indeed, he is a hypochondriac suffering pains in every part of his body. He wants his daughter, Angelique, to marry the stupid son of a doctor, and not Cleante, the man she truly loves. Argan's second wife, Beline, would like to put Angelique in a convent. But through the tricks and hijinks of Toinette, the maid, and Beralde, Argan's brother, all of the schemers are exposed and in the process the cast and the audience have had a rollicking good time.

This adaptation is intended primarily for students and is an excellent version for school presentations, contests, festivals, and tours to other schools. It has the advantages of having characters that students like to play and being an easily "transportable" show to take elsewhere.

About 30 minutes.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(7m, 4w, or with doubling, 4m, 3w. In order of appearance.)

ARGAN: A wealthy Parisian and the imaginary invalid.

TOINETTE: A maid in Argan's house.

ANGELIQUE: Argan's older daughter.

BELINE: Argan's second wife.

MONSIEUR DE BONNEFOI: A notary.

CLEANTE: A young gentleman in love with Angelique.

MONSIEUR DIAFOIRUS: A physician.

THOMAS DIAFOIRUS: His son and also a physician.

LOUISON: Argan's younger daughter.

BERALDE: Argan's brother .

MONSIEUR PURGON: A physician.

Doubling: Angelique can also play her younger sister, Louison. Monsieur Diafoirus and Thomas Diafoirus can play Beralde and Monsieur Purgon. Additionally, one of them can also play Monsieur De Bonnefoi.

(See further information, including Costume Suggestions and Character Analyses, at end of script.)

SCENE SYNOPSIS

Scene 1 -- Paris, 1673. Argan's sitting room. An afternoon.

Scene 2 -- The same. The next day.

Scene 3 -- The same. The next evening.

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SETTING

Openings for entrances and exits are Up Center and Down Left. When a character comes from outside the house, he comes from the opening Up Center from Left. When he comes from the family's chambers and the salon, he comes from Up Center from Right. The Down Left opening leads to the domestic part of the house, the kitchen and pantry.

PROPERTIES

(Other stage properties may be used if the director wishes to create a more detailed setting. Those listed below are necessary to the dialogue.)

Writing table with dark tablecloth

3 high-backed chairs

Couch

Pillows, several for couch and chairs

Coverlet, on foot of couch

Medicine bottles with colored water in them

Tray, off DL (Toinette)

Goblet of medicine (Purgon)

Handkerchief (Beline)

Legal papers (Bonnetoi)

Anatomy chart, showing a skeleton (Thomas Diafoirus)

3 scrolls of music (Cleante)

Hand mirror on table

Doctor's satchel (Toinette)

MUSIC

One or more sprightly tunes of recorded harpsichord music will give the production a brisk tempo. This music is heard before the play, between the scenes, and at the end of the play.

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Scene 1

(The scene is a private chamber in Argan's house in Paris. ARGAN is seated at a table at LC. Before him is an array of medicine bottles, large and small and containing many colored liquids. Argan complains about being charged so much for his medicines. At times, he calls for his maid, Toinette.)

ARGAN: *(As if the apothecary were before him. Picks up a bottle of medicine.)* Monsieur Apothecary, you should be ashamed to charge your patients so much for medicines. *(Turns and calls DL.)* Toinette! *(Picks up another bottle.)* Sonniferous julep, to make me sleep, thirty-five sous. Toinette!

(TOINETTE peers in and smiles around DL entry. ARGAN reads from another bottle.)

ARGAN: *(Cont'd.)* Compound of rhubarb and rosatus, double strength, to cleanse the abdomen, thirty sous. Toinette! *(Another bottle.)* Cordial preservative potion, containing syrup of lemon and pomegranate, to freshen the blood, twenty sous. Toinette!

(TOINETTE comes L of ARGAN, giggling. She carries a tray.)

TOINETTE: Here I am, monsieur.

ARGAN: Where have you been? I've called you for so long my throat is raw.

TOINETTE: *(Rubbing her forehead.)* You hurried me so, I bumped my head on the window shutter.

ARGAN: You're a clumsy baggage!

TOINETTE: *(Teasing him, she talks over one of his shoulders and then the other. R of him, moaning.)* O--hh!

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ARGAN: Will you be quiet so I can scold you?

TOINETTE: *(L of Argan. She peers through her fingers on her head to see if she is getting any sympathy.)* O--oh! But I bumped my head!

ARGAN: Stop interrupting me, you minx. I want to scold you.

TOINETTE: *(Pouting.)* No.

ARGAN: Yes.

TOINETTE: If you scold me anymore, I'll cry.

ARGAN: You gypsy. Am I to be denied the pleasure of scolding an impudent jade? Here I am a sick man, and everybody leaves me to die.

TOINETTE: *(L of him.)* Oh--h! My poor head!

ARGAN: Be quiet, I say! *(Points to the medicines on the table.)* Take these away, and have some broth ready so I can take my pills.

TOINETTE: *(As she gathers up the medicine bottles and puts them on the tray.)* Your doctor, Monsieur Purgon, uses your carcass like a milk cow's. He gets rich off you.

ARGAN: Hold your tongue, ignorance, and bring Angelique, to me. I have something to say to her.

(ANGELIQUE enters UPC from R and comes R of ARGAN.)

TOINETTE: Ah, here she is now. *(She takes the tray of medicines offstage and returns.)*

ARGAN: Come here, daughter, I want to speak with you.

ANGELIQUE: But, your doctor, Monsieur Purgon, is here to see you about your new medicine.

ARGAN: Monsieur Purgon is here! *(Rises. To Angelique.)* Give me my cane. I'll return presently ...

(ANGELIQUE gets the cane from the couch and helps ARGAN to go moaning out of the room UPC.)

ANGELIQUE: *(Returning to CS.)* Toinette, what do you think?

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TOINETTE: *(Comes to Angelique.)* What I think is nothing. But I know what you're thinking is something very important. For the past six days you've thought of nothing but your young lover.

ANGELIQUE: Oh, Toinette, isn't he handsome!

TOINETTE: Yes, he is.

ANGELIQUE: And such a noble bearing he has, and the most wonderful personality in the world.

TOINETTE: Undoubtedly.

ANGELIQUE: He speaks well, don't you think?

TOINETTE: He certainly does.

ANGELIQUE: And he declares his love for me at every meeting. *(Down to earth.)* Do you think he's serious?

TOINETTE: It's hard to say. But the letter he wrote you yesterday saying he was determined to ask for your hand in marriage -- ah, this should indicate his true feelings for you.

ANGELIQUE: Oh, Toinette, if he deceives me, I'll never believe a man as long as I live.

TOINETTE: Here's your father come back.

ARGAN: *(Enters and sits in RC chair.)* Daughter, I have news for you, news you'd never suspect.

(ANGELIQUE becomes excited and rushes to her father's left. TOINETTE takes a step toward them as she shows her pleasure at the approaching announcement.)

ARGAN: I can see this brings joy to your heart. A suitor has come to me to ask for your hand in marriage.

ANGELIQUE: *(Smiles, and gives Toinette a quick glance.)* Oh, sir, I'm overjoyed.

ARGAN: Then you're willing to be married?

ANGELIQUE: I have an obligation to follow my father's wishes.

ARGAN: What a dutiful daughter! It has been settled. I've promised you in marriage, even though your stepmother wishes that I should make nuns of both you and your sister, Louison.

TOINETTE: The sly beast.

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