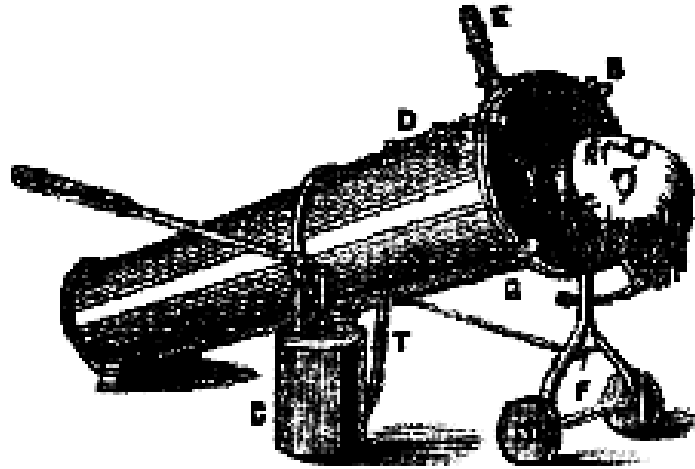


Teacher Guide



THE PERPETUAL

PATIENT

A new adaptation of Molière's *The Imaginary Invalid*

by Keith Reddin

May 15 - 24, 1998



**THE
THEATRE
SCHOOL**

DePaul University

at DePaul's Merle Reskin Theatre
60 E. Balbo Drive, Chicago

Box Office: **(312) 922-1999**



Teacher Guides

Teacher Guides are developed with the assistance of Richard Pettengill's dramaturgy class at The Theatre School, DePaul University.

Guides are distributed free of charge to teachers and other ticket purchasers. They are intended as a tool to facilitate learning, discussion, and an enhanced theatre experience for our audience.

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A Note from the Dramaturg

When director Michael Maggio first started thinking about The Theatre School at DePaul University's production of *The Imaginary Invalid*, he was drawn not to the time period in which Molière wrote the play but to the turn of the century in America. He then asked playwright Keith Reddin to work on an adaptation. The result is *The Perpetual Patient* — a new adaptation of *The Imaginary Invalid*.

The impulse to adapt and update the play came from the fact that both quackery and advertising blossomed in the early 1900s; a detail which this production maximizes. This allows the production team to introduce some discreditable devices and treatments which were all circulating the retail market at this time. Reddin's adaptation follows Molière's script in form, content and character. Changes have been made for the sake of period and simplicity. For example, in Molière's script Argan has two daughters; in the new adaptation Argan has one daughter. Also, some of the character names have been changed.

In this production we have incorporated several product endorsements. In the early 1900s marketing flourished. Through spoken and written advertisements, charlatans preyed on the fears of individuals in order to sell their product. They introduced products which could cure a multitude of ailments ranging from obesity to mental illness.

Likewise, we have employed many of the devices of the period in our production. Many of these devices seem absurd to our sensibilities but at the turn of the century the market for them was thriving.

—Alyssa R. Dyksterhouse

About Molière: Character Comedy

Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, Molière, (1622-1679) holds a place in the theatre world along with Shakespeare, Chekhov and Ibsen. His works include *Tartuffe*, *Don Juan*, *The Miser*, *The School for Wives*, *The Misanthrope* and *The Imaginary Invalid*.

After graduating from College de Clermont in Paris in 1643 with a degree in law, Molière joined with 11 others to form L'illustre Theatre (The Illustrious Theatre). Two years later the troupe went bankrupt and Molière was sent to jail for a brief time. Following his release from jail the company toured the Provinces for 15 years. Upon their return to Paris in 1658 they enjoyed a royal audience. In 1665 King Louis XIV dubbed them the "Troupe of the King," and they started performing at Versailles. In 1672 the fickle king withdrew the title.

The Imaginary Invalid was Molière's last work. He collapsed on stage while performing the role of Argan and died.

Molière's contribution to French Drama was character comedy. When Molière began writing, the two dominant forms of comedy were the improvisational Italian commedia dell'arte, which was almost devoid of plot, and the high comedy that depended upon elaborate, complex plots. Molière explored the farcical comedy which had been popular 26 years before. This comedy is marked by its preoccupation with cuckoldry and slapstick devices. Molière used this comedy to address contemporary fashions and customs. The result of Molière's farce was a shift from plot to character.

One motif in Molière's work is the contrast between mask and face, or truth and lie. He usually employs stock characters such as young lovers, witty servants, tyrannical parents and absurd pendants; yet, in Molière's work these stock characters are humanized with hints of the psychological forces behind them.

"Hypochondria is a supreme form of Narcissism"

— *Michael Maggio*



The Perpetual Patient

Glossary of Terms

Hypochondria

Abnormal anxiety about one's health, often with imaginary or exaggerated illnesses and severe melancholy

Quack

An untrained person who practices medicine fraudulently; characterized by pretentious claims with little or no foundation and dishonestly claiming the effect of a cure

Enema

The insertion of liquid into the rectum by means of a syringe

Farce

Type of comedy with exaggerated characters and ridiculous situations; reliant upon low jokes and physical humor

Adaptation

A play which has been adjusted or changed from a previous work such as a novel or a play

The Characters

Argan

A wealthy hypochondriac

Beline

Argan's second wife and stepmother to his daughter Angelique

Angelique

Argan's only daughter

Mr. Clutter

Argan's lawyer

Bernard

Argan's brother

Cleatis

The man with whom Angelique is in love

Bridget

Argan's servant with Marxist tendencies

Dr. Purge

One of Argan's doctors

Thomas

Dr. Purge's nephew. A medical student.

Dr. Flea

A German specialist



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The Perpetual Patient: Plot Synopsis

Argan has mounting medical bills which he can alleviate through an arranged marriage of his daughter to his doctor's nephew Thomas. Angelique is already in love with and wishes to marry Cleatis and therefore refuses to marry Thomas. Argan then threatens to condemn Angelique to a convent. Beline, Argan's wife, wants Argan to change his will in her favor and capitalizes on this dispute. Bridget, Argan's parlor maid and Angelique's confidant, devises a plan to show Argan that he is being taken advantage of by his doctors and his wife — as well as saving Angelique from the unfortunate wedding her father has arranged. Argan's brother teams up with Bridget on the side of Angelique and Cleatis in a hilarious conclusion.

The American Medical Association Fights Health Fraud

by Robert Tenuta • *AMA Archives*

The purpose and mission of the American Medical Association is to promote the art and science of medicine and the betterment of public health. Since its founding in 1847, the American Medical Association has worked to advance the quality of medical education, science and medical practice. The AMA's fight against health fraud is one of many initiatives that contributed to a high standard for safe and effective medicine nationwide. Many of the medical remedies used by Argan on stage were modeled after actual devices collected by the American Medical Association in its investigation of those medical practices classified by the AMA as health fraud.

The American Medical Association established what would later be called the Department of Investigation in 1913 under Arthur J. Cramp M.D. to investigate health fraud. The Department of Investigation examined the legitimacy of all untested and promoted medical cures and devices. Many questionable health claims during the first half of the 20th century were exposed by the AMA's Department of Investigation as being either fraudulent or based upon bizarre theories.

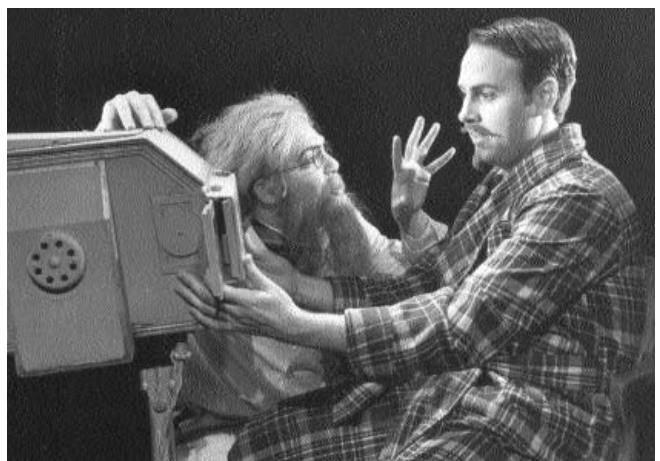
The American Medical Association's fight against health fraud was later adapted and instituted by the federal Food and Drug Administration. Although the Food and Drug Act was enacted in 1906, it only regulated false advertising. Only the AMA investigated the safety and effectiveness of medical remedies through its Department of Investigation as well as through the Council on Pharmacy and Chemistry, testing the legitimacy of new medicines. After 1938, the Food and Drug Administration started its continuous program of testing medical cures before approving of their usage by the American public. In 1975, the Department of Investigation's concerns were re-assigned to different departments or offices of the AMA.

The American Medical Association has also guaranteed quality medical care through improving the standards of medical education. As a result of

the Flexner Report, developed in a joint effort between the AMA and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in 1910, many medical schools whose curricula was inadequate for preparing a well-trained physician were classified as diploma mills and put out of business. As a result of the AMA's efforts, Americans enjoy the highest quality of medical care.

Today, the American Medical Association still works to advance the quality of medicine. Located at 515 N. State Street in Chicago, many different councils and committees work to advance medical education, science, and medical practice nationwide. Through annual meetings of the House of Delegates, bringing together representatives of state medical societies and different medical specialists, physicians have a voice to affect positive change. The AMA also disseminates the latest insights in medical science to physicians nationwide and throughout the world through publication of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (including international editions) and other highly respected medical journals.

The Department of Investigation's legacy is preserved in the Historical Health Fraud and Alternative Medicine collection, which is open for research to college students and faculty. Research into our collection has been used for writing books, articles, dissertations, and other projects such as *The Perpetual Patient*. Researchers interested in the collection can call the AMA Archives at (312) 464-4083 or e-mail us at <Archives@ama-assn.org>



The Perpetual Patient

Activities

- 1 Have students research health fraud. Ask them to find present-day examples of alternative healing with questionable methods. Why are these methods questionable? What avenues has the manufacturer or practitioner employed to persuade customers? Is there any harm in the product or method? If so, how much — monetary or physical?
- 2 Create an ad for a product employing the various elements of propaganda — testimonials, repetition, logos, celebrity endorsements. These ads can be as honest or fraudulent as the student desires. After each student has presented his or her ad discuss the merits of each one as propaganda. What would make you want to buy or not buy the product?
- 3 To explore hypochondria have students think about their physical existence for a day. What aches and pains did they feel? Did thinking about their physicality heighten their awareness of these pains? Did a headache turn into a migraine? Did a stomach ache turn into a tumor? Did they find themselves more focused on these aches and pains?
- 4 Examine the idea of “Face versus Mask” in *The Perpetual Patient*. Who is being honest? Who is not? Why? How does this idea advance the plot?

1998-99 Season Schedule

Announcing The Theatre School's 1998-99 Season

In celebration of the DePaul University Centennial: A Season of American Journeys



Tintypes

conceived by Mary Kyte,
Mel Marvin and Gary Pearle
musical arrangements by Mel Marvin

November 6 - 15, 1998
(previews 11/4 & 11/5)

The Glass Menagerie

by Tennessee Williams

December 4 - 13, 1998
(previews 12/2 & 12/3)

Our Town

by Thornton Wilder

March 5 - 14, 1999
(previews 3/3/ & 3/4)

Sleep Deprivation Chamber

by Adrienne Kennedy

April 23 - May 2, 1999
(previews 4/21 & 4/22)

The Grapes of Wrath

adapted by Frank Galati from the
novel by John Steinbeck

May 21 - 30, 1999
(previews 5/19 & 5/20)



Steal Away Home

by Aurand Harris

October 6 - December 5, 1998

Mother Jones

A new play by Dean Corrin

March 30 - May 22, 1999

Coyote and His Brothers

by Lin Wright

based on Anna Moore Shaw's
Tales of the Pima Indians

January 12 - March 6, 1999

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