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SF PERUSALS

THE PRODIGIOUS SNOB

A New Adaptation by

MILES MALLESON

of LE BOURGEOIS GENTILHOMME *by*

MOLIERE

With Music by

JOHN HOTCHKIS

SAMUEL  FRENCH

LONDON

NEW YORK SYDNEY TORONTO HOLLYWOOD

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THE PRODIGIOUS SNOB

Presented by the Bristol Old Vic Company at the Theatre Royal, Bristol, on September 25th, 1951, with the following cast of characters :

(*in the order of their appearance*)

A Composer	*David Edwards*
A Music Master	*Christopher Burgess*
A Dancing Master	*William Eedle*
A Lady Singer	*Jane Chapman*
1st Flunkey	*Julian Slade*
2nd Flunkey	*Frederic Beale*
Monsieur Jourdain	*Miles Malleson*
A Fencing Master	*Michael Aldridge*
The Fencing Master's Assistant	*Bob Harris*
A Philosopher	*Newton Blick*
A Tailor	*Roland Bryant*
The Tailor's Assistant	*Bob Harris*
Nicole, Madame Jourdain's maid	*Sheila Burrell*
Madame Jourdain	*Elaine Wodson*
Count Dorante	*Michael Aldridge*
Cleonte, in love with Lucille	*John Neville*
Covielle, Cleonte's servant	*Laurence Payne*
Lucille, Jourdain's daughter	*Prunella Scales*
The Marchioness Dorimene	*Pamela Alan*
A Chef	*Newton Blick*
A Serving Maid	*Jane Chapman*
The Mufti	*Newton Blick*

Turks, Dancing Girls, Dervishes

The play produced by Denis Carey

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

A room in Monsieur Jourdain's house, in Paris.

A Summer morning. 1670.

ACT II

Scene 1. A street in Paris. The same afternoon.

Scene 2. The same as Act I. Late the same afternoon

ACT III

The same. The evening of the same day.

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THE PRODIGIOUS SNOB

ACT I

SCENE.—*A room in* MONSIEUR JOURDAIN'S *house in Paris. A Summer morning.* 1670.

The room is spacious and ornate, with the back half raised by a rostrum. This is approached by a wide single step flanked by columns. There is a wide exit from the rostrum up C. *to* L. *There is an exit through an arch down* L. *There is an exit down* R., *through an arch raised on a rostrum and approached by one step. There is a sofa against the back wall up* C., *a spinet with a stool* R., *a writing-table and chair* L. *and a daybed* L.C. *Large branched candelabra on pedestals stand above the spinet,* R. *and* L. *of the sofa and above the arch down* L.

(*See the Ground Plan at the end of the play.*)

When the CURTAIN *rises, the* COMPOSER *is seated at the spinet. He is young, and is in the very throes of composition ; in the agonies and ecstasies of creation. He has a sheet of manuscript music on the spinet in front of him and holds a quill pen. The* DANCING MASTER *stands below the spinet. The* MUSIC MASTER *stands* R. *of the head of the daybed. The* LADY SINGER *stands* C. *of the rostrum step* C. *They watch the* COMPOSER *intently, and hang on his every sound and gesture, sharing his birth pangs. For a few moments, the* COMPOSER *is stuck in the very final passage of his composition. Then he has a possible idea.*

COMPOSER. Ah !
DANCING MASTER
MUSIC MASTER
LADY SINGER } (*together*). Ah !

(*With much scratching of his quill pen, the* COMPOSER *sets down a bar of music, then decides he does not like it.*)

COMPOSER. Oh, no, no, no !
MUSIC MASTER. No, no, no !
DANCING MASTER. No, no, no!
LADY SINGER. No !

(*The* COMPOSER *gives a groan of despair, scratches out the last bar, then has another inspiration.*)

COMPOSER. Aaaah !

DANCING MASTER
MUSIC MASTER
LADY SINGER } (*together*). Aaaah !

(*The* COMPOSER, *writing at a great pace, sets down the final bars of his composition, beginning to sing as he does so.*)

COMPOSER (*with a triumphant flourish of his pen*). Done ! (*He tosses the pen on to the spinet.*) Finished ! (*He picks up the manuscript, rises and moves* C.) Completed !

MUSIC MASTER (*moving to* L. *of the* COMPOSER). Completed !

DANCING MASTER (*moving to* R. *of the* COMPOSER). Finished !

LADY SINGER (*moving above the* COMPOSER). Done !

MUSIC MASTER. Quick, quick, quick—let me see, give it me, let me look. (*He takes the manuscript from the* COMPOSER *and crosses to* R. *of the* DANCING MASTER.)

(*The* LADY SINGER *leads the exhausted* COMPOSER *to the daybed. He lies on it and relaxes. The* LADY SINGER *stands above the daybed.*)

(*He studies the manuscript. In ecstatic appreciation.*) Exquisite ! Entrancing ! Delicious ! Oh, oh, oh, heavenly little wisps of sound, caught and captured in this frail web of notes.

DANCING MASTER. Let's hear, let's hear !

MUSIC MASTER. Within these bars, immortal songs, imprisoned !

DANCING MASTER. Then set them free for us, set them free.

MUSIC MASTER (*suddenly becoming very matter-of-fact*). All in good time. (*He crosses to* C.) As soon as our worthy friend and patron, the good Monsieur Jourdain, deigns to wake himself up, and remember that we're all here—waiting for him.

DANCING MASTER. Monsieur Jourdain !

COMPOSER. Monsieur Jourdain !

LADY SINGER. Monsieur Jourdain !

(*They all laugh.*)

MUSIC MASTER. That's enough ! (*He moves up* C. *on to the rostrum and looks off* L.) That'll do. You forget yourselves. You may laugh ; you may mock—but as for our Monsieur Jourdain, tell me this : (*he moves to* L. *of the* DANCING MASTER *and leads him down* R.) where should we be without him ? (*Confidentially.*) No, my old friend. Let's be frank with one another. We've never been so well off in all our lives. It would be a great thing for us—for your dancing and my music—if the whole world were made up of Monsieur Jourdains.

DANCING MASTER. God forbid ! God forbid ! I admit I've never been so well off. But that's not the "All of life". I do so *crave* for a little appreciation. I hunger, and I thirst, for the appraisement of Good Taste.

MUSIC MASTER. What's this ? What's this ? What nonsense are you talking ? Monsieur Jourdain is full of appreciation—

DANCING MASTER. Eh ?

MUSIC MASTER. —of all the wrong things.

(*The* DANCING MASTER *and the* MUSIC MASTER *laugh together.*)

He has a great deal of taste—

DANCING MASTER. What ?

MUSIC MASTER. —and all bad.

(*They laugh together.*)

And, he has money.

DANCING MASTER (*agreeing*). Money.

MUSIC MASTER. And, he pays us.

DANCING MASTER (*agreeing*). Pays us.

MUSIC MASTER. Whatever we ask.

DANCING MASTER (*agreeing*). Whatever we ask.

(*During the following speech, the* COMPOSER *rises, moves up* C. *on to the rostrum, beckons to the* LADY SINGER, *then sits on the sofa. The* LADY SINGER *moves to the sofa and sits on it,* L. *of the* COMPOSER.)

MUSIC MASTER. And, my dear fellow, do you know, I'm beginning to realize more and more the value of my work. I find myself asking more and more for it every day. His money ! What more valuable appreciation can he give us. And the *sound* of the gold pieces, as they clink and jingle from *his* purse into *mine*—what applause ! What rapturous applause !

(*They laugh together.*)

You can have all the hand-clapping in the world.

(*They laugh heartily together. The* COMPOSER *and the* LADY SINGER *rise.*)

COMPOSER (*warningly*). Here he comes. (*He crosses and stands on the rostrum down* R.)

(*The* LADY SINGER *crosses and stands on the step of the rostrum down* R. *The* DANCING MASTER *crosses and stands above the daybed. The* MUSIC MASTER *hands the manuscript to the* LADY SINGER, *then eases* R.C. *All look up* L. *The* 1*st and* 2*nd* FLUNKEYS *enter up* L. *They wear elaborate and fantastic liveries. The* 1*st* FLUNKEY *crosses and stands* R. *of the rostrum step* C., *the* 2*nd* FLUNKEY *stands* L. *of the rostrum step* C. MONSIEUR JOURDAIN *sweeps on up* L. *He wears an almost incredibly flamboyant dressing-gown over a tight pair of breeches, stockings, buckle shoes and a white frilled shirt. He is without his wig. He is in high spirits.*)

JOURDAIN (*as he enters*). I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. (*He moves* C. *To the* MUSIC MASTER.) Sorry master Dancing Master. (*To the* DANCING MASTER.) Sorry master Music Master. (*He realizes his mistake.*) Oh, no ! Sorry again, you're the wrong one. You dance—(*he turns to the* MUSIC MASTER) you sing. Got you all muddled. No matter, no matter. I've been putting on my new stockings. Yes, I've been putting 'em on for the last hour. At one time I thought I'd be dead and buried before I got 'em on ; and now they're on, as far as I can see, they're on for good. (*He catches sight of the* COMPOSER *and* LADY SINGER *and crosses below the* MUSIC MASTER *to them.*) Hullo ! I don't know who you are, but I'm sorry to keep you waiting.

MUSIC MASTER (*obsequiously*). No need to be sorry . . .

DANCING MASTER. To wait for you, Monsieur, is in itself a pleasure.

JOURDAIN (*crossing to* C.). Then you can wait a bit longer. My tailor's bringing my new suit. I'm to be dressed from head to foot as a man of quality. I want you to see me as a man of quality.

DANCING MASTER. A sight worth waiting for.

JOURDAIN (*to the* DANCING MASTER ; *very suddenly*). What d'you think of my new dressing-gown ?

DANCING MASTER (*at a loss for an answer*). Well, I—I must say—er . . .

MUSIC MASTER (*coming to the rescue*). Overwhelming !

DANCING MASTER (*gratefully*). The very word—overwhelming. Quite overwhelming.

JOURDAIN. Yes. My tailor tells me the best people wear them when they first get up. (*He suddenly and utterly unexpectedly shouts at the top of his voice.*) *Flunkey !*

(*The 1st and 2nd* FLUNKEYS *move sharply to* R. *and* L. *respectively of* JOURDAIN.)

1st FLUNKEY. Monsieur ?

2nd FLUNKEY. Monsieur wants something ?

JOURDAIN. No, no, nothing—I just wanted to see if you'd answer. (*To the* DANCING MASTER.) What d'you think of their liveries ? (*To the* FLUNKEYS.) Turn round.

(*The* FLUNKEYS *twirl outwards.*)

DANCING MASTER (*at a loss for an answer*). Well—I must say—I . . .

MUSIC MASTER (*coming to the rescue*). Nature, in her wildest moods—designing flowers, birds or insects—never imagined anything half so—unnatural.

DANCING MASTER (*gratefully*). I couldn't have expressed it better.

JOURDAIN (*to the* 1st FLUNKEY). Flunkey.

1st FLUNKEY. Monsieur ?

JOURDAIN. Take my dressing-gown off.

(*The* 1st FLUNKEY *removes* JOURDAIN'S *dressing-gown and stands holding it.*)

No. (*He takes the dressing-gown from the* 1st FLUNKEY.) *You* took it off. (*He hands the dressing-gown to the* 2nd FLUNKEY.) *You* hold it. Now make yourselves scarce.

(*The* FLUNKEYS *move and resume their positions* R. *and* L. *of the rostrum step up* C.)

(*He displays himself.*) How d'you like it ! For my exercises in the morning.

MUSIC MASTER. Such elegance !

DANCING MASTER. Such ease !

JOURDAIN. As a matter of fact, it's damned uncomfortable ; and as for doing my exercises, I can hardly breathe. But he's a good tailor, so I suppose he knows best. (*He sits on the daybed.*) Now, how about this little bit of nonsense you're getting ready for me ?

MUSIC MASTER. I beg your pardon ?

JOURDAIN. Didn't you want me to listen to a new tune ?

MUSIC MASTER (*easing* C.). Oh, yes, of course, of course—the Aria.

JOURDAIN. The what ?

MUSIC MASTER. Aria.

JOURDAIN. I never ordered a . . . I ordered a tune.

MUSIC MASTER. But, my dear Monsieur, an Aria is, as you might say, in a kind of way—a tune.

JOURDAIN. Eh ? What's this ? D'you mean to tell me that people of quality call a tune a—a . . .

MUSIC MASTER. An Aria. Yes.

JOURDAIN. Oh, well, let's have the—the—what you said, and to hell with the tune.

MUSIC MASTER. May I present the young composer who has just composed it for you.

(*The* COMPOSER *bows, then moves and stands below the spinet.*)

JOURDAIN. Just composed it ?

MUSIC MASTER. Yes.

JOURDAIN. Just this minute ?

MUSIC MASTER. Yes.

JOURDAIN. Here, (*he indicates the spinet*) on that spot ?

MUSIC MASTER. On that spot.

JOURDAIN. While I was putting on my stockings ! That's remarkable. Very remarkable.

MUSIC MASTER. A remarkable young man. One of my pupils, Monsieur, of outstanding merit.

JOURDAIN. What's this ? A pupil ? But this won't do, master Music Master. This won't do at all. (*He rises and moves* C.) I paid you enough money for you to do the job yourself.

MUSIC MASTER. But, Monsieur, you misunderstand.

JOURDAIN. Oh, no, I don't ! I understand well enough. When I pay good money, I expect the best. Pupil indeed ! You shall only have half what we arranged.

MUSIC MASTER (*completely deflated*). But, dear Monsieur . . .

JOURDAIN. Half !

MUSIC MASTER. But, Monsieur . . .

JOURDAIN. Half !

DANCING MASTER (*crossing below the daybed to* L. *of* JOURDAIN). But, Monsieur, people of quality . . .

JOURDAIN (*falling for the phrase and turning to the* DANCING MASTER). Eh ?

DANCING MASTER. People of real distinction and quality realize that a pupil can far outshine his master. Why, most of the nobility—indeed all the nobler of the nobility—would gladly pay *double* for the work of this pupil.

JOURDAIN. Double ?

MUSIC MASTER. Double. But don't let that trouble you, Monsieur Jourdain. Don't give it another thought. I take no account of money. And, in any case, we can adjust the difference over the next piece of work. (*He crosses to the* LADY SINGER *and takes the manuscript from her.*) Now you shall hear it, sung from the manuscript.

JOURDAIN. The what ?

MUSIC MASTER (*crossing to* R. *of* JOURDAIN). The manuscript. And the ink scarce dry. (*He hands the manuscript to* JOURDAIN.)

JOURDAIN (*looking at the manuscript*). Oooh ! He's made an awful mess of it. What are all these black blobs ?

MUSIC MASTER. The notes.

JOURDAIN (*handing the manuscript to the* MUSIC MASTER). Well, go ahead. And let's hope it sounds better than it looks.

(*The* DANCING MASTER *moves down* L. JOURDAIN *sits on the daybed. The* MUSIC MASTER *moves to the* LADY SINGER, *hands her the manuscript then stands on the rostrum down* R. *The* COMPOSER *sits at the spinet. The* LADY SINGER *moves below the spinet and sets the manuscript on it.*)

COMPOSER. One, two. (*He plays.*)

LADY SINGER (*singing*).

" To languish so, both night and day,
Without the least . . . "

JOURDAIN (*interrupting*). Wait a moment. (*He rises. To the* FLUNKEYS.) Give me my dressing-gown. I can hear better with it on.

(*The* FLUNKEYS *move to* JOURDAIN *and help him into his dressing-gown.*)

(*To the* LADY SINGER.) Start again. (*He sits.*)

COMPOSER. One, two. (*He plays.*)
LADY SINGER (*singing*).

" To languish so, both night . . . "

JOURDAIN (*interrupting*). No. Sorry. (*He rises.*) Better without it. (*To the* 1st FLUNKEY.) Take it.

(*The* 1st FLUNKEY *removes the dressing-gown and hands it to the* 2nd FLUNKEY *to hold.*)

(*To the* LADY SINGER.) Right. Start again. (*He sits.*)
COMPOSER. One, two. (*He plays.*)
LADY SINGER (*singing*).

" To languish so, both night and day,
Without the least respite ;
To feel the pangs of ardent love,
Its sorrows, its delight ;
If I, a friend, must suffer so . . . "

(JOURDAIN *makes violent signs to the* 2nd FLUNKEY, *and speaks over the singing in loud breathy whispers.*)

JOURDAIN (*to the* 2nd FLUNKEY). I tell you what : put it round my shoulders ; can't you hear ? Round my shoulders.

(*The* 2nd FLUNKEY *drapes the dressing-gown around* JOURDAIN'S *shoulders.*)

No, not like that. Oh, you are clumsy !

(*The music and singing break off. The* MUSIC MASTER *eases to* R. *of the* LADY SINGER.)

Yes, like that—that's better. (*To the* LADY SINGER.) Hullo, what have you stopped for ? (*He pauses.*) Well, get on with it ; get on with it !

(*The* FLUNKEYS *move and stand in their places* R. *and* L. *of the steps.*)

Don't start from the beginning ; I've heard that bit. Start from where you left off. (*He makes himself comfortable on the daybed.*)
MUSIC MASTER (*aside to the* COMPOSER). From the beginning, he won't notice.

(*The* LADY SINGER *looks indignantly at* JOURDAIN *and eases* R.C.)

COMPOSER. One, two. (*He plays.*)

LADY SINGER (*singing*).

" To languish so, both night and day,
Without the least respite ;
To feel the pangs of ardent love,
Its sorrows, its delight ;
If I, a friend, must suffer so,
Bound captive by your eyes,
Oh, sad indeed must be the plight
Of those your enemies. "

JOURDAIN. Bit on the depressing side, isn't it ?

MUSIC MASTER (*crossing to* C.). But how exquisitely the music expresses the words.

(*The* LADY SINGER *eases down* R. *and stands on the rostrum.*)

JOURDAIN. Do they come first ? Fancy that ! I knew a song once. Much jollier than this. It was about a hare.

MUSIC MASTER. A hare ?

JOURDAIN. Yes, one of those quick rabbits. How did it go ?

MUSIC MASTER. I'm sure I don't know.

JOURDAIN (*singing*).

" I thought my little sweetheart,
As kind as she was fair.
I thought my little sweetheart,
As harmless as a hare.
But wilder, far, a hundred times,
Yes, fiercer, she, a thousand times,
Than any savage tiger,
That in the forest roams. "

Pretty, isn't it ?

MUSIC MASTER. Incomparable !

JOURDAIN. What's that mean ?

MUSIC MASTER (*at a loss for an answer*). Er . . .

DANCING MASTER (*coming to the rescue*). He means, he never heard anything like it.

JOURDAIN. And I never learnt to sing.

MUSIC MASTER. But you should. To learn to sing is as necessary as to learn to . . .

DANCING MASTER. To dance.

JOURDAIN. Do people of quality learn to dance and sing ?

DANCING MASTER (*moving and standing* L. *of* JOURDAIN, *at the foot of the daybed*). Why, yes.

MUSIC MASTER (*moving and standing* R. *of* JOURDAIN, *at the head of the daybed*). But, of course.

JOURDAIN. Then I will ; if I can find the time—but my fencing master's coming at any moment ; and I've engaged a teacher of philosophy.

MUSIC MASTER. Well, of course, fencing and philosophy . . .

DANCING MASTER. They're all very well . . .

MUSIC MASTER. But music . . .

DANCING MASTER. And dancing.

MUSIC MASTER. Together—

DANCING MASTER. Together . . .

MUSIC MASTER. —teach a man everything he wants to know.

JOURDAIN. Everything ?

DANCING MASTER. Everything.

JOURDAIN (*rising*). I don't see how you make that out. (*He drops the dressing-gown on the daybed and eases* C.)

MUSIC MASTER. But, Monsieur, the very Nation is in peril unless all its citizens have a good ear for music.

DANCING MASTER. Civilization itself is precarious unless all the peoples know how to dance.

JOURDAIN. Oh, come, come, come !

(*The* 1st FLUNKEY *crosses and exits up* L. *The* 2nd FLUNKEY *moves to the daybed, picks up the dressing-gown and exits with it up* L.)

Now, now, now ! I've a lot to learn, I know that—a great deal ; but I find that hard to swallow.

MUSIC MASTER (*moving above* JOURDAIN *to* R. *of him*). But, Monsieur, Monsieur, are not all our misfortunes, our sufferings, all the tragedies of history—even that greatest scourge of mankind, war itself—due to a lack of harmony among us ?

JOURDAIN. Yes, that's true enough.

(*The* DANCING MASTER *eases to* L. *of* JOURDAIN.)

MUSIC MASTER. But a knowledge of music, Monsieur, can resolve the discords, can harmonize conflict into co-operation ; and bring us to the ineffable full-close of universal peace.

DANCING MASTER. And when disaster overtakes us—perhaps in our own lives, perhaps in the life of our country—do we not always say : " That was due to a false step " ?

JOURDAIN. That's true.

DANCING MASTER. And how is a false step conceivable, if one knows how to dance ?

JOURDAIN. Of course, of course—you know, I can't be such a fool. I understand all that. It's as plain as a pike-staff.

MUSIC MASTER. Then you'll take the full curriculum of music—

DANCING MASTER. And the complete schedule of dancing—

MUSIC MASTER. —yes ?

JOURDAIN. Yes.

DANCING MASTER. —yes ?

JOURDAIN. Yes. (*He eases down* L.C.)

DANCING MASTER } (*together ; as they shake congratulatory*
MUSIC MASTER } *hands behind* JOURDAIN'S *back*). Yes !

DANCING MASTER (*moving to* JOURDAIN). Now, if you please, Monsieur, our first lesson—the Minuet.

JOURDAIN (*turning*). Oh, but I can dance a Minuet, almost as well as I can sing.

DANCING MASTER. Come—show me, show me. Your hand. (*He holds* JOURDAIN'S *right hand and faces* R.)

(JOURDAIN, *below the* DANCING MASTER, *faces* R.)

(*To the* COMPOSER.) Please—a Minuet.

(*The* COMPOSER *plays a Minuet on the spinet.* JOURDAIN *and the* DANCING MASTER *dance a few steps.*)

(*As they dance.*) La. La. La. Keep time. La. La. La. Turn the toes out. Head up.

(JOURDAIN *makes a mistake and stops.*)

JOURDAIN. That's enough of that—I've just thought of something. I want you to teach me to bow to a Marchioness—a Marchioness called Dorimene.

(*The* COMPOSER *rises, move to the* LADY SINGER *and exits with her down* R. *The* MUSIC MASTER *eases* R.)

DANCING MASTER. I take it you wish to show considerable respect ?

JOURDAIN. Considerable ? I want to show her there's no kind of respect I'm not showing.

DANCING MASTER. Then you must bow once—so—retiring from the lady as you do so—(*he illustrates this*) leaving enough space between yourself and the lady, so that you can then advance towards her, bowing three times as you do. (*He illustrates this, advancing to* JOURDAIN *and bowing twice.*) Each bow must be lower than the last, until, at the final bow, you should be almost touching the lady, your head on a level with her knee. (*He illustrates this.*)

JOURDAIN. Let me try. (*He makes a bow.*)

DANCING MASTER (*standing down* C.). That's right. Now move backwards.

(JOURDAIN *backs a little to* L.C.)

Further ! Further back.

(JOURDAIN *backs another two steps.*)

You must be very careful there's enough space between you for the advance and the three bows—that's all—important. Now !

(JOURDAIN *advances and does the first bow.*)

Good—now the second bow.

(JOURDAIN *advances and does the second bow.*)

Lower. Good. Now advance again till you almost touch the lady—then bow again.

(JOURDAIN *advances and does the third bow.*)

Lower—lower—lower.

(JOURDAIN *bows lower and lower. As he does so, the* 1st FLUNKEY *enters up* L. *and moves* C. *of the rostrum up* C.)

1st FLUNKEY (*announcing*). The Fencing Master. (*He crosses and stand* R. *of the steps up* C.)

(*The* FENCING MASTER *strides on up* L. *and moves down* L.C. *He is a terrific fellow, dressed for fencing and carrying a foil.* JOURDAIN *bent almost double, is unable to straighten himself. The* 2nd FLUNKEY *enters up* L. *and moves* C. *of the rostrum up* C.)

2nd FLUNKEY (*announcing*). The Fencing Master's Assistant. (*He moves and stands* L. *of the steps up* C.)

(*The* DANCING MASTER *crosses and stands* R. *with the* MUSIC MASTER. *The* FENCING MASTER'S ASSISTANT *enters up* L. *and moves to* R. *of* JOURDAIN. *The* ASSISTANT *is a very small boy. He carries a fencing glove and foil. He bends down to* JOURDAIN, *thrusts the glove and foil into* JOURDAIN'S *hands, then runs and stands* C. *of the steps up* C.)

FENCING MASTER (*hardly pausing for breath*). And now, Monsieur Jourdain, *if* you please.

(JOURDAIN, *still bent, puts the glove on his left hand and holds the foil in his right hand.*)

No time to spare. I have five more lessons to give this afternoon, and ten this evening. (*He whacks* JOURDAIN *across his seat with the flat of his foil and crosses to* R. *of him.*)

(JOURDAIN *straights abruptly.*)

On guard ! (*He pushes, prods and pokes* JOURDAIN *into some semblance of the correct fencing position and attitude, pouring on him, all the while, a stream of instructions, as merciless and quick as the thrust of his own foil.*) Now, Monsieur, the Salute. Stomach in. The weight on the left leg. The legs not so far apart. The feet in a straight line. Head on a level with the hip.

(JOURDAIN *discovers he has the glove on the wrong hand, tucks his foil under his left arm and changes the glove.*)

(*He moves to* JOURDAIN *and draws the foil from under* JOURDAIN'S *arm.*) Point of the foil in line with the shoulders.

(JOURDAIN *giggles as the withdrawing of the foil tickles him. The* FENCING MASTER *hands the foil to* JOURDAIN, *who stands awkwardly on guard.*)

The arm not so stiff. (*He circles above* JOURDAIN *to* L. *of him.*) Left hand level with the eye.

(JOURDAIN *turns and faces the* FENCING MASTER.)

Left shoulder further round. Head up. Eyes fixed on mine. (*He circles below* JOURDAIN *to* R. *of him.*)

(JOURDAIN, *bewildered, looks around for the* FENCING MASTER, *then turns to face him.*)

Now thrust in Quart.

(*The lesson proceeds,* JOURDAIN *endeavouring to follow the instructions.*)

Now lunge—one, two—leap back. Once again. The foot firm—one, two—again a leap backwards. When you lunge, Monsieur, your blade must come first—and hold the stomach in. One, two—smartly. Now advance—Pierce. Now lunge. Advance, advance. Stomach in. Advance, advance. One, two—move back. Attack. One, two—again leap backwards. On guard, Monsieur. Parry, parry, parry. (*At each "parry" he jabs* JOURDAIN *in the ribs.*)

(JOURDAIN *emits various grunts, squeaks and squeals.*)

(*He drives* JOURDAIN *to* R. *of the daybed and jabs at him.*) So. So. So.

(JOURDAIN, *wearied and muddled, collapses exhausted on the daybed. The* FLUNKEYS *exit up* L.)

(*He salutes with his foil.*) Rest ! (*He lowers his foil and moves* C.) You see, Monsieur, the whole art of fencing lies in being able to give, and not receive ; to strike, and not be struck.

JOURDAIN. So that a man who's not really very brave—not overflowing with courage, as you might say—might be able to hit somebody without any risk of being hit back ?

FENCING MASTER. Which sums up, in a nutshell, why the art of fencing is so much greater than any of the other arts. Especially the so-called arts of dance and music.

MUSIC MASTER. Eh ?

DANCING MASTER. What's this ?

MUSIC MASTER (*crossing to* R.C.). Be a little more careful, my good fellow—if you please—how you talk of music.

DANCING MASTER (*crossing to* L.C.). And speak of dancing—if you don't mind—with at least a glimmering of insight.

FENCING MASTER. Can I believe my ears ? Are you two clowns comparing yourselves and your work to me and mine ?

MUSIC MASTER. Never !

DANCING MASTER. God forbid !

MUSIC MASTER (*easing down* R.). Music reaches to the sky ! Does a mountain compare itself to a molehill ?

DANCING MASTER (*easing down* L.). Dancing flows on for ever ! Does a river measure itself against a puddle ?

FENCING MASTER (*flourishing his foil ; angrily*). Heaven have mercy on 'em, I'll kill 'em both !

JOURDAIN. Gentlemen, gentlemen, are you mad ? Quarrelling with a man who can hit you and you can't hit him back.

MUSIC MASTER. The braggart !

DANCING MASTER. The blustering, boastful, bullying butcher !

FENCING MASTER (*rushing headlong at the* DANCING MASTER). You little cock-sparrow ! (*He aims a great blow at him with his foil, using it as if it were a stick to beat him with.*)

(*With incredible agility, the* DANCING MASTER *dodges above the daybed.* JOURDAIN *hides his head like an ostrich, in the cushions on the daybed.*)

DANCING MASTER. You great turkey-cock !

FENCING MASTER (*chasing round the* L. *end of the daybed*). Grasshopper !

DANCING MASTER (*dodging down* R. *of the daybed*). Clodhopper !

FENCING MASTER (*with a howl of rage*). Aaaah ! (*He chases above the daybed to* R. *of it.*) Take that ! (*He trips and falls on the daybed.*)

DANCING MASTER (*turning quickly and deftly kicking the* FENCING MASTER *on his seat*). Take that—in tierce. (*He kicks again.*) And that—in carte. (*He dodges down* L.)

FENCING MASTER (*scrambling to his feet*). I'll tear him limb from limb—(*he stands down* R.C. *and prepares himself for another terrible onslaught on the* DANCING MASTER) limb from limb !

(*The* FLUNKEYS *enter up* L. *and take up their positions* R. *and* L. *of the steps up* C.)

1st FLUNKEY (*announcing*). A learned Master . . .

2nd FLUNKEY (*announcing*). Of Philosophy.

(*The* PHILOSOPHER *enters up* L., *moves down* C., *but stops on confronting the* FENCING MASTER *ready for attack.* JOURDAIN *rises.*)

JOURDAIN (*running to* L. *of the* PHILOSOPHER). Oh, master Philosopher, master Philosopher. Come quick ! Quick, quick, quick ! Out with your philosophy, calm these gentlemen.

PHILOSOPHER. Gentlemen ! Gentlemen ! Sirs ! Good people ! *Friends* ! Fie, fie, fie ! What unseemliness. What a sad lack of human dignity. (*He exudes an immense aura of philosophic calm.*) Dear, dear, dear ; really, really, really ! Haven't you read Seneca's great treatise upon anger—that base passion that makes beasts of men ?

DANCING MASTER. That's all very well . . .

MUSIC MASTER. He dared compare my music—

DANCING MASTER. And my dancing.

MUSIC MASTER. —with his coarse pastime of swordplay.

FENCING MASTER. Coarse pastime ! This low pedlar of sound. This hopping, skipping, jig-maker.

DANCING MASTER. Jig-maker !

MUSIC MASTER. Pedlar of sound !

PHILOSOPHER. Tut, tut, tut ! And again, tut ! Why fall out among yourselves upon such trifles ?

DANCING MASTER. Trifles ?

MUSIC MASTER. Trifles !

FENCING MASTER. *Trifles !*

PHILOSOPHER. *Trifles !* Is there so much difference between you?

DANCING MASTER. Difference ?

MUSIC MASTER. Difference !

FENCING MASTER. *Difference !*

PHILOSOPHER. In your own eyes, yes. But I tell you—in the discerning eye of the All-seeing Absolute, you are all much of a muchness. And I tell you more—none but the stunted envy the overgrown ; none but the overgrown look down upon the stunted. Great wisdom and great virtue, alone, give one man stature above another ; and that man, in his wisdom and his virtue, is unaware of it.

MUSIC MASTER. But what's all your wisdom and virtue worth—unless you can sing it ?

DANCING MASTER. Or express it with your arms and legs ?

FENCING MASTER. Show me the philosophy, or the philosopher, that can't be laid low in the dust with one swift thrust of my rapier.

PHILOSOPHER. What's this ? What's this ? You're three very impudent fellows. My gorge rises. I don't know whenever before I've met with such shamelessness.

(*The* FENCING MASTER *gives a short surprised snort of indignation, the* DANCING MASTER *a squeal and the* MUSIC MASTER *a bellow.*)

(*He turns to the* MUSIC MASTER.) You low, common, ballad-monger ! (*To the* DANCING MASTER.) You prancing mountebank ! (*To the* FENCING MASTER.) You senseless gladiator !

FENCING MASTER. Insufferable pedant !

DANCING MASTER. Pedagogue !

MUSIC MASTER. Bookworm !

PHILOSOPHER (*angrily*). This is beyond endurance ! (*In a paroxysm of ungovernable rage, he crosses quickly to the* MUSIC MASTER *and slaps his face.*) That's for you ! (*He crosses hurriedly to the* DANCING MASTER, *lifts one side of his wig and slaps his face.*) And you !

(*The* FENCING MASTER *drops his foil on to the floor and covers his face with his hands.*)

(*He crosses quickly to* R. *of the* FENCING MASTER, *but being unable to slap his face, hits him in the stomach.*) And you !

(*The* DANCING MASTER, *the* MUSIC MASTER *and the* FENCING MASTER *surround the* PHILOSOPHER *and beat and kick him.*)

MUSIC MASTER. Take that !

DANCING MASTER. And that !

FENCING MASTER. And that !

JOURDAIN (*yelling*). Flunkeys ! Flunkeys !

(*The* FLUNKEYS *and the* FENCING MASTER'S ASSISTANT *move to the struggling group* C.)

Take 'em away !

(*The* FENCING MASTER'S ASSISTANT *bundles the* FENCING MASTER *off up* L. *The* 1st FLUNKEY *drags the* DANCING MASTER *off down* L. *The* 2nd FLUNKEY *drags the* MUSIC MASTER *off down* R. *The* PHILOSOPHER *is left a huddled mess. The* FENCING MASTER'S ASSISTANT *re-enters up* L., *crosses to the* PHILOSOPHER *and starts to drag him up* C.)

(*To the* ASSISTANT.) Leave the Philosopher.

(*The* ASSISTANT *drops the* PHILOSOPHER *on the steps up* C., *collects the two foils and glove, then exits with them up* L.)

(*He runs to* L. *of the* PHILOSOPHER.) Oh, master Philosopher, master Philosopher, I'm so sorry. What a misfortune.

(*The* PHILOSOPHER *rises and straightens his clothes.*)

I'm afraid you got a very bad beating. A terrible thrashing.

PHILOSPHER (*quite unperturbed*). Oh, no matter. That's nothing to worry about. A philosopher thinks nothing of a little thing like that. I'll write a satire against them after the manner of Juvenal. Now, if you please, what do you wish to learn ?

JOURDAIN. Everything. (*He sits on the daybed.*) I have a sudden indescribable urge to be wise.

PHILOSOPHER (*easing down* C.). Well said, well said ; excellently well spoken. "*Nam sine doctrina vita est quasi mortis imago.*" You understand Latin, of course ?

JOURDAIN. Oh, yes, of course. But—just for fun—let's pretend that I don't, so that you can tell me what it means.

PHILOSOPHER. "*Nam sine doctrina . . .* " and so on ?

JOURDAIN. Yes. Now what would you say that means ?

PHILOSOPHER (*easing* R.C.). Well, simply—"For, without knowledge, life is but a reflection of death."

JOURDAIN. Oh, dear, dear, dear ! I don't want to be *that*, do I ? A reflection of death. God forgive me ! But it is true, you know. It's got something, this Latin. (*He rises and crosses to* L. *of the* PHILOSOPHER.)

PHILOSOPHER. Would you like to learn it ?

JOURDAIN. What ?

PHILOSOPHER. Latin.

JOURDAIN. Is it all as good as that ?

PHILOSOPHER. Well, not all.

JOURDAIN. Then I won't bother.

PHILOSOPHER. Well, what would you like to start with ?

JOURDAIN. What could I start with ?

PHILOSOPHER. You might start with Moral Science.

JOURDAIN. What's that ?

PHILOSOPHER. Moral Science ?

JOURDAIN. Yes, what does that teach ?

PHILOSOPHER. It teaches us to control our passions.

JOURDAIN (*moving down* L.). Oh, no, no, no ! None o' that ! Now I'm as rich as I want, I want to be as cross as I want whenever I want.

PHILOSOPHER. There *are* other passions.

JOURDAIN. There *are*, there *are*. You're right there—and I'm not going to have anyone controlling *those*. (*He moves to the daybed.*) Not you, not me. No. (*He sits on the daybed, at the downstage end.*) Let 'em rip, say I. Now I can afford it, let 'em rip. No, I tell you what. (*He pats the daybed with his right hand, inviting the* PHILOSOPHER *to sit.*)

(*The* PHILOSOPHER *crosses and sits* R. *of* JOURDAIN *on the daybed.*)

Teach me to understand what people of quality are talking about, so that when they talk to me they don't seem to be talking utter nonsense.

PHILOSOPHER. Ah, then I'm afraid we shall have to begin right at the beginning ; we must go right back to the letters themselves.

JOURDAIN. What letters ?

PHILOSOPHER. *The* letters.

JOURDAIN. Whose letters ?

PHILOSOPHER. The alphabet.

JOURDAIN. Oh, those letters. Yes.

PHILOSOPHER. The vowels and the consonants.

JOURDAIN. Yes, I've heard of 'em.

PHILOSOPHER. There are five vowels : AH, EH, EE, AW, OO.

JOURDAIN. That's right. I got just about as far as that at school.

PHILOSOPHER. AH is formed by opening the mouth wide. So—AH.

JOURDAIN (*copying*). AH. Yes, so it is.

PHILOSOPHER. EH is formed by slightly approaching the lower towards the upper jaw. So—AH—EH.

JOURDAIN (*copying*). AH—EH. Right again. Wonderful !

PHILOSOPHER. EE is formed by bringing the jaws yet closer together while stretching the corners of the mouth in the direction of the ears. So—AH—EH—EE.

JOURDAIN (*copying*). AH—EH—EE. (*Delighted.*) EE—EE—EE. What fun this is.

PHILOSOPHER. AW—by opening the mouth while closing the lips. So—EE—AW.

JOURDAIN (*copying*). EE—AW. (*He repeats.*) EE—AW. (*He rises, moves down* C. *and brays like a donkey.*) EE—AW. EE—AW. Oh, what a thing it is to be a scholar.

PHILOSOPHER (*rising and moving to* L. *of* JOURDAIN). OO by protruding the lips, and making a face as if one is mocking. So—OO.

JOURDAIN (*copying*). OO—OO—OO. Oh, to think one can learn wisdom just by making a face. (*He eases* R.)

PHILOSOPHER (*easing down* L.C.). Now we pass on to the consonants.

JOURDAIN (*moving* C.). No, we don't. We'll do them tomorrow. I want you to help me write a letter to a Marchioness.

PHILOSOPHER (*moving to* L. *of* JOURDAIN). Oh, yes, indeed.

JOURDAIN. And then I thought I might drop it at her feet.

PHILOSOPHER. At her feet !

JOURDAIN. Would that be all right ?

PHILOSOPHER. Most gallant !

JOURDAIN. That's what I thought.

PHILOSOPHER. You'd want it, of course, in verse.

JOURDAIN. Oh, no, no, no ! Dear me, no ! Nothing like that. Not in verse.

PHILOSOPHER. In prose . . .

JOURDAIN. Oh, no, no, no ! Dear me, no ! Nothing like that. Not in prose.

PHILOSOPHER. But it must be—

JOURDAIN. Must be what ?

PHILOSOPHER. —in verse or prose.

JOURDAIN. No, no, no. You don't understand. Expense is no object. I want the best.

PHILOSOPHER. But it must be either prose or verse.

JOURDAIN. You're being very obstinate, master Philosopher. There's no "must" about it.

PHILOSOPHER. But, good Monsieur, there *is* only prose and verse. One can only express oneself in prose or verse.

JOURDAIN (*after a pause*). Is there nothing else ?

PHILOSOPHER. Nothing. All that's not verse is prose, and all that's not prose is verse.

JOURDAIN. But—but—what we're saying now, is that prose ?

PHILOSOPHER. Of course.

JOURDAIN. But—d'you mean to tell me when I say to Nicole, for instance—"Get me a clean nightdress, there's a flea in this one ", that's prose ?

PHILOSOPHER. Most certainly.

JOURDAIN. Well, well, well, to think I've been talking prose all my life and never knew it. Really, I am very much obliged to you—I do feel I've learnt something this morning. Now, about the letter : I want to say to the lady, "Loveliest lady, your lovely eyes make me die of love". Only I want it very elegantly expressed.

PHILOSOPHER (*crossing below* JOURDAIN *to* R.C.). Well, you might put it that—that the flame of her eyes had reduced your heart to ashes.

JOURDAIN. No, I don't want to go so far as that.

PHILOSOPHER. Or that you're so consumed by the fire of love that, day and night, you suffer the tortures of the damned.

JOURDAIN. Oh, but I don't ! No, I just want what I said, "Loveliest lady, your lovely eyes make me die of love".

PHILOSOPHER. Rather short, isn't it ?

JOURDAIN. But I want it short ; so I'll be sure she reads it all. No, I want those words ; but I want them twisted.

PHILOSOPHER. But if you want the same words there are only so many ways they *can* be twisted.

JOURDAIN. What ways ?

PHILOSOPHER. Of love, loveliest lady, your lovely eyes make me die. Your lovely eyes, loveliest lady, of love make me die. Your lovely eyes of love make me die, loveliest lady.

JOURDAIN. Which is best ?

PHILOSOPHER. As you first said it. "Loveliest lady, your lovely eyes make me die of love. "

JOURDAIN. I got it right the first time. (*He gives a sudden, unexpected yell.*) Flunkey ! (*To the* PHILOSOPHER.) Come again tomorrow.

(*The* PHILOSOPHER *crosses and exits quickly up* L. *The* 1st FLUNKEY *enters up* L., *crosses and stands* R. *of the rostrum step* C.)

1st FLUNKEY. Monsieur ?

JOURDAIN. Has my tailor come ?

1st FLUNKEY. No, Monsieur.

JOURDAIN (*turning and moving down* L., *with a yell*). Flunkey ! (*He looks off down* L.)

(*The* 2nd FLUNKEY *enters down* R. *and stands on the rostrum down* R.)

2nd FLUNKEY. Monsieur ?

JOURDAIN (*turning and crossing to* R.). Are you sure my tailor hasn't come ?

2nd FLUNKEY. Quite sure, Monsieur.

JOURDAIN (*facing the* 2nd FLUNKEY R. ; *angrily*). Then he's keeping me waiting. *Why* is he keeping me waiting ? How *dare* he keep me waiting ? I *won't* be kept waiting. Who does he think I am ?

(*The* TAILOR *and his* ASSISTANT *enter up* L. *and move to* C. *of the rostrum up* C. *The* TAILOR *is a very superior person, with a quiet, but immense contempt for* JOURDAIN *and all his like. The* ASSISTANT *carries a new coat, sash, hat and wig for* JOURDAIN.)

(*Furiously.*) Who does he think he is ? The dastardly tailor. The skunk, the scamp, the knave, the dog. But I'll teach him. You wait. If I had him here, I'd—I'd . . . (*He turns, sees the* TAILOR *and is suddenly deflated.*) I was just wondering what had become of you. (*He sits on the daybed.*)

(*The* 1st FLUNKEY *crosses and exits up* L. *The* 2nd FLUNKEY *exits down* R. *The* TAILOR *moves* C.)

TAILOR (*bowing*). At your service.

JOURDAIN. These stockings you sent me—I all but couldn't get 'em on at all.

TAILOR (*with a supercilious glance at* JOURDAIN'S *legs*). They'll go on easier next time.

JOURDAIN. They'll split.

TAILOR. Then you'll want some new ones.

JOURDAIN. And these shoes—they hurt.

TAILOR. Oh, no, they don't.

JOURDAIN. Don't !

TAILOR. A perfect fit.

JOURDAIN. Do you mean, I imagine they hurt ?

TAILOR. What you imagine, good Monsieur, is no concern of mine ; but they don't hurt. (*He turns to his* ASSISTANT.) If you please.

(*The* ASSISTANT *moves to* R. *of the* TAILOR. JOURDAIN *rises and moves to* L. *of the* TAILOR, *who takes the coat from his* ASSISTANT.)

JOURDAIN. Is this my new coat ?

TAILOR. This is not a coat.

JOURDAIN. But I ordered a coat.

TAILOR (*displaying the coat*). It's a work of art. No painter could have created anything more exquisite with his brush than I have with my needle.

JOURDAIN. Then it'll look well on me.

TAILOR. It will look superb anywhere.

JOURDAIN. Come on, then : let's try it on.

TAILOR. I wish it to be understood, Monsieur, I am not here to try my clothes on you ; but to try *you* in my clothes. Now, if you please.

(JOURDAIN, *helped by the* TAILOR *and the* ASSISTANT, *puts on the sash, coat, wig and hat.* JOURDAIN *hums and sings his little song about the hare. The* ASSISTANT *takes a small hand mirror from his pocket and holds it up to* JOURDAIN *as he adjusts his wig and hat.*)

(*He surveys* JOURDAIN.) Quite unrecognizable. I shouldn't know you, Monsieur. A great triumph. I'm satisfied. (*He turns and crosses down* R. *To the* ASSISTANT.) Come, boy.

(*He exits down* R.)

TAILOR'S ASSISTANT (*to* JOURDAIN). My Lord, would it please your Lordship to give the Assistant something to drink your health with ?

JOURDAIN. What did you call me ?

TAILOR'S ASSISTANT. "My Lord", my Lord.

JOURDAIN (*taking his purse from his pocket ; to himself*). "My Lord". That shows what the right clothes'll do. (*He takes a coin*

from his purse and hands it to the ASSISTANT.) Here you are—this from my Lordship.

TAILOR'S ASSISTANT (*bowing*). A thousand thanks, your Excellency.

JOURDAIN. "Excellency". (*He takes another coin from his purse and gives it to the* ASSISTANT.) This, from my Excellency.

TAILOR'S ASSISTANT (*bowing*). God bless your Grace.

JOURDAIN. "Grace". (*He gives a third coin to the* ASSISTANT.) Take that from my Grace. (*Aside.*) If he goes to "Highness" I'll give him the lot.

(*As* JOURDAIN *speaks aside, the* ASSISTANT TAILOR *bows and exits down* R.)

(*He turns and looks* R.) He's gone.

(NICOLE, *the serving-maid, enters up* L., *stands on the rostrum step* C. *and stares at* JOURDAIN. *She carries a broom.*)

(*He replaces his purse in his pocket.*) P'raps it's as well. (*He turns and sees* NICOLE.) Ah, Nicole, my girl ; there you are ; I was just going to send for you.

(NICOLE *moves to* R.C. *and stares at* JOURDAIN.)

NICOLE (*giggling*). Oh, dear, oh dear !

JOURDAIN. What is it ? What's the matter ?

(NICOLE *continues to giggle.*)

What are you laughing at ?

NICOLE (*giggling*). I can't help it. Oh, master—what a sight.

JOURDAIN. Hold your tongue !

(NICOLE *giggles.*)

Be quiet ! Shut your mouth !

(NICOLE *shuts her mouth tight.*)

Now, listen to me, my girl. If you laugh any more, if you so much as let out one little squeak, you'll get the worst hiding of your life. Did you hear that ?

(NICOLE, *her mouth tightly shut, nods her head.* JOURDAIN *moves down* L.C. *As he does so,* NICOLE, *unable to suppress her feelings any longer, bursts into laughter.*)

(*He turns, startled.*) Oh !

NICOLE (*laughing*). It's no good, I can't keep it in. (*She moves to the spinet and leans her broom on it.*) Oh, beat me, master, you'll have to beat me, and then I can have a real good laugh, a real good belly laugh—I shall feel so much better that way. (*She collapses in helpless laughter on to the spinet stool.*)

JOURDAIN (*crossing to* R.C.). Was there ever such a hussy. Laughing in my face. Refusing to listen to the orders I want to give her.

NICOLE (*trying to stop laughing*). Oh, I'm sorry, master, I'm sorry. What orders, master—what orders ?

JOURDAIN. Tonight I'm giving a dinner party. A very grand dinner party.

NICOLE. Oh, if you'd said that to start with, master, I wouldn't have wanted to laugh at all. These grand friends of yours—the mess they make.

(MME JOURDAIN *enters up* L. *She carries a workbasket.* NICOLE *rises and moves down* R.)

MME JOURDAIN (*moving above the daybed*). Lord, lov' a duck ! God 'a' mercy ! Something new ! Worse and worse ! (*She puts the workbasket on the daybed.*) What have you got on now ? What d'you call that ?

JOURDAIN. A work of art.

MME JOURDAIN (*crossing to* L. *of* JOURDAIN). My good man, are you absolutely determined to make a laughing stock of yourself before the whole world ? (*She takes* JOURDAIN'S *hat from his head, crosses to* L. *and puts the hat on the writing table.*)

JOURDAIN. Only the ignorant will laugh.

MME JOURDAIN. Don't you believe it. They're all laughing already.

JOURDAIN. And who's "all", if I may ask ?

MME JOURDAIN (*moving down* L.C.). All your old friends, because your new friends are making such a fool of you : and all your new friends, because you're making such a fool of yourself.

NICOLE. It's true, dear master, it's true—with your music teacher and your dancing teacher.

MME JOURDAIN. Dancing teacher indeed ! What d'you want to learn dancing for ? So you can dance when you're too old to walk ?

NICOLE. And now there's another one, Madame—a philosopher.

MME JOURDAIN (*sitting on the daybed*). Oh, don't tell me that !

JOURDAIN. And why not, pray ? (*He moves and stands* R. *of the head of the daybed.*) What's wrong with that ? Why shouldn't I wish to be wise, and know everything ?

MME JOURDAIN. You'll be running back to school next ; with your little satchel on your back ; and getting a good caning. (*She starts to sew.*)

JOURDAIN. I would, I would, gladly, if just by being caned I could know everything they teach at school.

MME JOURDAIN. And what good would that do you ?

JOURDAIN. What good ?

NICOLE (*easing* R.C.). Yes, what good, master ?

JOURDAIN. You make me ashamed to be talking to you. Listen—I'll teach you something. (*To* MME JOURDAIN.) What you're saying now—what is it ?

MME JOURDAIN. What I'm saying now ?

JOURDAIN. Yes.

MME JOURDAIN. I'm saying, at your age, you'll never be a dancer or a philosopher, and it won't do any of us any good, if you try.

JOURDAIN. No, no, no ! What is it, what you're saying ?

MME JOURDAIN. Sense, my good man, sound sense.

JOURDAIN. No, no, no ! That's not what I mean. What I'm saying now, what is it ?

MME JOURDAIN. Nonsense. Stupid nonsense.

JOURDAIN. God give me patience ! The words we're speaking—what are they called ?

MME JOURDAIN. I don't know what you're talking about.

JOURDAIN. Prose, my good woman, prose.

MME JOURDAIN. Prose ?

JOURDAIN. Yes.

MME JOURDAIN. Why ?

JOURDAIN. Why ?

MME JOURDAIN. Yes, why ?

JOURDAIN. Well because—because it isn't verse. Whatever isn't verse is prose ; and whatever isn't prose is verse. You didn't know that. (*He turns to* NICOLE.) And I'll teach you something. (*He moves to the writing-table.*) Where's my stick. (*He picks up his stick.*)

NICOLE. You're not going to beat me ?

JOURDAIN (*moving* C.). No, no, no. Now—you get hold of your broomstick.

(NICOLE *moves to the spinet and picks up her broom.*)

(*With his stick as a foil, he takes up the fencing stance.*) Now try and hit me if you can.

(NICOLE *prods* JOURDAIN *several times in the ribs with her broom handle and drives him down* L.)

Ow, ow, ow ! *Ow, oo, ow* ! Oh, how stupid you are. Ignorant ! You're thrusting in tierce, while I'm defending in carte. (*He dodges above the daybed to* C.)

(NICOLE *stands down* L.)

MME JOURDAIN. My dear, what utter nonsense all this is. But there's something worse than nonsense about it. This Count, that's always about the place . . .

JOURDAIN. Sssh !

MME JOURDAIN. He's a bad egg, if ever there was one.

JOURDAIN. Please ! You don't know who you're talking about. He's a friend of the King's ; he talks to the King—just as you talk to me. Think of that ! Isn't it an honour that a man, who talks to the King, should talk to me. And as an equal. I ask you ! Calls me his friend—his dear friend. (*He moves down* R.C.)

MME JOURDAIN. And then borrows your money.

JOURDAIN. Isn't it an honour to lend money to a man who talks to the King ? And, besides, if you knew what he was doing for me . .

MME JOURDAIN. What is he doing for you ?

JOURDAIN (*confused*). Eh ? Oh ! (*He moves to the spinet and puts his stick on it.*) Nothing ! I didn't mean to mention it. But, all the same, you'd be surprised if you knew.

MME JOURDAIN. What *are* you talking about ?

(NICOLE *leans her broom against the wall* L., *then sits* L. *of* MME. JOURDAIN *on the daybed.*)

JOURDAIN (*easing* C.). Nothing. I've lent him money, and he'll pay it back—and that's all.

MME JOURDAIN. He'll pay it back ?

JOURDAIN. Yes.

MME JOURDAIN. You think so ?

JOURDAIN. He's promised.

MME JOURDAIN. Promised !

JOURDAIN. On his honour.

MME JOURDAIN. His honour !

JOURDAIN. As a gentleman.

MME JOURDAIN. Gentleman !

JOURDAIN. And a Count.

(*The* 1st FLUNKEY *enters up* L., *crosses and stands* R. *of the rostrum step* C. *The* 2nd FLUNKEY *follows him on and stands* L. *of the rostrum step* C.)

1st FLUNKEY (*announcing*). His Excellency, the Count Dorante.

MME JOURDAIN. Come to borrow some more money.

JOURDAIN (*easing down* R.C.). To pay it back.

MME JOURDAIN. We shall see.

(COUNT DORANTE *enters up* L.)

COUNT (*as he enters*). My friend, my dear, dear friend. (*He hands his hat to the* 2nd FLUNKEY *then moves down* C.) And Madame, too—this is indeed a pleasure. And wonderful you're looking, my dear fellow—quite the courtier.

(*The* 1st FLUNKEY *crosses and exits up* L. *The* 2nd FLUNKEY *puts the* COUNT'S *hat on the writing-table, then exits up* L.)

MME JOURDAIN (*aside to* NICOLE). He scratches him where it itches.

COUNT (*to* JOURDAIN). Turn round.

(JOURDAIN *turns round and displays his new clothes.*)

Astonishing !

MME JOURDAIN (*aside to* NICOLE). Just as silly from behind as in front.

COUNT (*to* JOURDAIN). And you know, when I opened my eyes this morning, I found myself possessed with an irresistible desire to see you today.

JOURDAIN. Oh ! You don't say so !

COUNT (*crossing below* JOURDAIN *to* R.). And what's so strange about that ? You're not only my friend, but my best friend—I was saying something of the sort to the King within this half-hour.

JOURDAIN (*to* MME JOURDAIN). Did you hear that ?

COUNT. On several occasions lately, my friend, my dear friend, my best of friends, my more than generous friend—

MME JOURDAIN (*to* JOURDAIN; *under her breath*). Now we're coming to it.

JOURDAIN (*to* MME JOURDAIN ; *out of the corner of his mouth*). Ssh !

COUNT. —you've been good enough to advance me certain sums of money.

MME JOURDAIN (*aside to* NICOLE). He has, the fool.

COUNT. And, to be quite frank, that's why I'm here today. I've come to settle my little account with you.

JOURDAIN (*to* MME JOURDAIN ; *under his breath*). Who's the fool now !

COUNT. You have, I hope, kept a record of all I've had from you ?

JOURDAIN (*crossing to the writing-table*). Yes, yes, I have. I have it here. (*He picks a paper from the writing-table.*) The first loan was for a hundred crowns. (*He moves down* C.)

COUNT (*easing* R.C.). Correct.

JOURDAIN. Then a hundred and fifty.

COUNT. That's so.

JOURDAIN. Then two hundred.

COUNT. Quite right.

JOURDAIN. Then three hundred to your saddler.

COUNT. Yes.

JOURDAIN. Five hundred to your tailor.

COUNT. So you did.

JOURDAIN. And a little matter of seven hundred and fifty crowns, twelve francs, two and a half sous to settle your grocer's bill.

COUNT. And how much is that in all ?

JOURDAIN. In all ? A trifle over two thousand crowns. Shall we say two thousand ?

COUNT. With pleasure we'll say two thousand. And if you'll add a further thousand, which I'm going to borrow now, I'll let you have the full three thousand as soon as ever I can manage it.

MME JOURDAIN (*to* NICOLE). What did I say ?

COUNT (*to* JOURDAIN). You're sure it won't inconvenience you to add a thousand ?

JOURDAIN. Oh, no, no. Not at all. Not at all.

COUNT. You'll be honest with me, good Jourdain. Honesty

above everything. It would be quite simple for me to borrow twice the amount from another friend—

JOURDAIN. No, no, no. I wouldn't hear of it.

COUNT. —but as you're my best friend, I thought it would be wrong not to let you have the first offer.

JOURDAIN. Oh, I'm glad you did.

COUNT. Then perhaps you'll let me have it at once. Most unexpectedly I find myself a little short.

JOURDAIN (*turning and crossing to the writing-table*). I have it here.

MME JOURDAIN (*to* JOURDAIN *as he crosses above the daybed*). Who's the fool now ?

(JOURDAIN *takes a bag of money from the drawer of the writing-table. As he does so, the* COUNT *bows to* MME JOURDAIN.)

COUNT (*gallantly*). And how does the good lady of the house find herself ?

MME JOURDAIN. Find herself ? By always knowing where she is, and what she's doing—which is more than I can say of some people I know.

JOURDAIN (*crossing to* L. *of the* COUNT). A thousand. (*He hands the bag of money to the* COUNT.)

COUNT. I thank you. (*He pockets the bag of money.*) And believe me, you won't regret it. I tell you the beautiful, the most desirable Marchioness . . .

JOURDAIN (*covering the mention of the* MARCHIONESS *with a cough*). Yes, yes, ahem, ahem ! Not so loud, if you don't mind. (*He takes the* COUNT *by the arm.*) A little further off—if you'd be so good. (*He leads the* COUNT *down* R., *out of earshot of* MME JOURDAIN *and* NICOLE.) Pardon me, if you'd step this way. Yes. You were saying, the beautiful Marchioness . . .

COUNT. Will be with you here tonight ; and has accepted the ring you gave me to give her.

MME JOURDAIN (*to* NICOLE). Now he's got what he came for, why doesn't he go ?

COUNT (*to* JOURDAIN). I tell you, she took some persuading. She knew its immense value ; and wouldn't accept it—until I told her that its worth did but match the great depth of the love that prompted the gift.

JOURDAIN. Good, good, good ! I shouldn't have thought of that.

COUNT. And altho' she pretends not to be, she's so pleased and proud of it—in spite of herself, she keeps drawing attention to it. (*He becomes very confidential and puts his head close to* JOURDAIN'S *head.*) Yes, my good Jourdain, I think—

JOURDAIN. Yes ?

COUNT. —I can't help hoping . .

JOURDAIN. Yes ?

COUNT. To put it plainly and bluntly, this ring of yours has done the trick.

JOURDAIN. Pray God it has.

MME JOURDAIN (*to* NICOLE). What are they up to ?

JOURDAIN (*to the* COUNT). You see, I've never even spoken to a lady of quality.

NICOLE (*to* MME JOURDAIN). No good.

JOURDAIN (*to the* COUNT). And to think that one as beautiful as this one—

MME JOURDAIN (*to* NICOLE). You're right.

JOURDAIN. —to me, good Monsieur, like something out of a fairy tale, or a dream—should actually be coming to my house, and will take notice of me.

MME JOURDAIN (*to* NICOLE). Go and try if you can hear what they're saying.

(NICOLE *rises and edges cautiously* C.)

COUNT (*to* JOURDAIN). Of course, when she comes to your house for the first time, you must expect her to be the very height of discretion.

JOURDAIN. Oh, indeed, indeed !

COUNT. She may even appear to pay more attention to me, than to you.

JOURDAIN. May she !

(NICOLE, *unobserved by the* COUNT *and* JOURDAIN *eases above them.*)

COUNT. But the more she does, the more you may hope.

JOURDAIN. Is that so ?

COUNT. And in the meantime, you can feast your eyes on her, and await your opportunity.

(NICOLE *edges close to and up* R. *of the* COUNT.)

JOURDAIN. I've arranged with my wife that she should spend the evening with her sister.

COUNT. No husband could be more considerate. It's quite possible Madame would not really appreciate your guest, or her entertainment. (*He crosses below* JOURDAIN *to* L. *of him.*) Well, dear fellow, I must be getting on my way. I have to visit the Marchioness—

JOURDAIN. Eh ?

COUNT. —to make the final arrangements for her visit here.

JOURDAIN. Oh, ah, yes—of course.

COUNT. I shall go on foot. The sun is out, and the way short.

JOURDAIN. If I might come some of the way with you . . .

COUNT. Well . . .

JOURDAIN. It would be a great honour.

COUNT. My dear fellow !

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