

# Excerpt terms and conditions



This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

*Dramatic Publishing*

Colorized covers are for web display only. Most covers are printed in black and white.



# *Molière in Love*

*Comedy/Farce by  
Laura Annawyn Shamas*

# Molière in Love

**Comedy/Farce. By Laura Annawyn Shamas.** *Cast: 5m., 2w., expandable to 7m., 5w.* Set in 1670, Paris, *Molière in Love* is based on the true story of Molière's theatrical attempt to win back the love of his much younger wife, Armande. In order to "re-romance" his wife, the playwright decides to write a play-ballet to showcase her talents and beauty. But because of Louis XIV's extramarital pursuits, the king demands that the show, *Psyché*, must be completed and produced within mere weeks. Casting requirements: 300 actors and dancers. Frantic to complete the project, Molière must partner with one of his rivals, Pierre Corneille, in order to please the king and "versify" the play quickly. As Molière assembles his troupe of actors and dancers to rehearse, the internal politics of his own company adds further complications. One of Molière's own former lovers is cast as the beautiful Venus, much to Armande's dismay. And Armande hates the handsome leading man with whom she must perform. Or so it seems ... until Molière stumbles upon them in a passionate, incriminating embrace, with the excuse that they are "just rehearsing." And then the king himself hints that he might demand a featured role in the extravaganza, as he is an accomplished ballet dancer who has not performed in two years—and there is someone new he'd like to impress. To top it all off, Molière's own young protégé/biographer is on hand to chronicle every minute of the action behind the scenes. Molière battles literary and romantic rivals, a meddling royal patron, an insane deadline and his own ego in order to create a work worthy of his task. But in the end, will it be enough to heal his marriage, keep the court appeased, and keep his company afloat? *Area staging. Approximate running time: 1 hour, 45 minutes. Code: MG2.*

Cover photo: Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi, Texas, featuring (l-r) Garrett Askins, Antoinette Robinson and Andrea Munoz. Photographer: Jeffrey Janko. Cover design: Jeanette Alig-Sergel.

ISBN-10 1-58342-594-2  
ISBN-13 978-1-58342-594-7



*Dramatic Publishing*

311 Washington St.  
Woodstock, IL 60098  
ph: 800-448-7469



Printed on recycled paper

[www.dramaticpublishing.com](http://www.dramaticpublishing.com)

© The Dramatic Publishing Company

# MOLIÈRE IN LOVE

By

LAURA ANNAWYN SHAMAS

This excerpt contains adult situations.



**Dramatic Publishing**

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

\*\*\* NOTICE \*\*\*

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our website: [www.dramaticpublishing.com](http://www.dramaticpublishing.com), or we may be contacted by mail at: DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, 311 Washington St., Woodstock IL 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including, but not limited to, the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved.

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play which are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.

©MMIX by  
LAURA ANNAWYN SHAMAS  
Printed in the United States of America  
*All Rights Reserved*  
(MOLIÈRE IN LOVE)

For inquiries concerning all other rights, contact:  
Abrams Artists Agency, 275 Seventh Ave., 26th floor,  
New York, NY 10001 • Phone: (646) 486-4600

ISBN: 978-1-58342-594-7

for Beth

## **IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS**

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the author of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The name of the author *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent (50%) the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with  
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois”

*Molière in Love* premiered at the University of Texas A&M/ Corpus Christi, November 13-18, 2007, at the Center for the Arts, Wilson Theatre. The production was directed by Marshall Carby and included the following:

## CAST

Molière. . . . .	Tyler Price
Corneille . . . . .	Jacob Louis
Armande. . . . .	Antoinette Robinson
Louis XIV . . . . .	Alan Carroll
La Grange . . . . .	Jake Raper
Baron . . . . .	Garrett Askins
Catherine . . . . .	Andrea Munoz
Woman . . . . .	Bri Wehman
Servant . . . . .	Shea Lollar
Servant. . . . .	Clayton Berger
Servant. . . . .	Nathan Estrada
Servant . . . . .	Rowdy Tidwell

## PRODUCTION TEAM

Stage Manager. . . . .	Kitty Carangelo
Assistant Stage Manager . . . . .	Kirsten Hogan
Dramaturge. . . . .	Charissa Graniero
Technical Director . . . . .	Philip Johnson
Set Design . . . . .	Marc Duncan
Light Design . . . . .	Chris Horung
Sound Design. . . . .	Jennie Freeman
Make-up Design. . . . .	Lisa Billings
Hair Design . . . . .	Nathan Barrientes
Furniture Design . . . . .	James Brogger
Properties . . . . .	Clayton Berger
Marketing/PR . . . . .	Sandra Martinez
Advisor . . . . .	Professor Chris Lusk



With great thanks to director Marshall Carby  
and the cast at  
University of Texas A & M/Corpus Christi.

# MOLIÈRE IN LOVE

## CHARACTERS

MOLIÈRE / “ZEPHYR” (m) . . . . . 48, handsome  
LA GRANGE / “KING” / “PSYCHÉ’S LOVER” (m) . . 28  
WOMAN / CATHERINE / “VENUS” (f) . . . . . 35-40  
KING LOUIS XIV (m) . . . . . 32  
SERVANT / MICHEL / “CUPID” (m) . . . . . 20  
ARMANDE / “PSYCHÉ” (f) . . . . . 20s  
CORNEILLE (m) . . . . . late 60s

Cast size: 2 women, 5 men minimum. Cast is expandable to 12: SERVANT, WOMAN as separate roles and 3 dancers/actors as additional company members.

TIME: November 1670 – January 1671.

PLACE: France - Paris and Versailles.

(Note: Words in dialogue in italics should be pronounced with a French accent.)

# ACT ONE

## SCENE ONE

*AS THE LIGHTS COME UP, MOLIÈRE lies in a small bed alone, asleep, wearing a white nightshirt. He is partially covered by a blue blanket. There is a sound: a CUCKOO CALLS. MOLIÈRE stirs. Then another CUCKOO CALL. He turns to the other side of the bed. Then another CUCKOO CALL, then another, and another. These calls may be done by members of the cast surrounding MOLIÈRE as dream images. MOLIÈRE squirms comically in bed, waving his hands over his head, still asleep. Another CUCKOO CALL; MOLIÈRE bolts straight up in bed. He addresses the heavens.*

MOLIÈRE. Stop! I refuse to be haunted by the cuckoo. I will win my wife back! I will be cuckolded no more. *(He rises and pulls out a parchment, and a quill. He begins writing furiously. While writing:)* “On the occasion of a future spectacle in honor of His Majesty, Louis XIV of France, the playwright Molière, in great appreciation of the continued patronage of the glorious king, proposes a musical ballet to be composed on the theme of... *(He stops and looks up. Then continues:)* Divine Love.” *(He smiles, holding up the parchment in the light. Tableau. BLACKOUT.)*

## SCENE TWO

*December 1670. AS LIGHTS COME UP, KING LOUIS XIV and a beautiful WOMAN are playfully entangled in the royal bed. There is an embroidered tapestry dressing screen R. The KING wears a long royal dressing shirt; the WOMAN is wrapped in embroidered sheets. The WOMAN giggles as the KING nuzzles her ears. The opened parchment lies on the bed.*

WOMAN (*flirty*). You keep the great player Molière waiting? While we play in here? Should we not let him in?

KING (*tracing his finger on her curves*). You know how I worship you, how I long for you every waking hour. The moment I see you, I bask in the fire of your eyes, the silk of your skin, the flame of your touch, the thrill of your beauty. My heart stops at the first sight of you.

WOMAN (*playfully*). Your mistress does not notice your thoughts are elsewhere?

KING. I do not notice her. Not since I laid eyes on you.

WOMAN (*backs away from him*). Sire, your words are most pleasing. (*Ups the stakes:*) And yet, they are not the great poet's words you promised me. (*She holds up the parchment, showing it to him. Then puts it down.*)

KING. You bargain with me? Have you not heard of my fickle treachery?

*(The WOMAN smiles, rises, covers herself with a sheet, and poses; the sheet drapes provocatively but still covers her.)*

WOMAN. Yesterday, you promised me a pageant. Do you wish to keep your devoted subject pleased?

*(He rises and moves her against a wall, as if to make love in this position. Her sheet starts to fall slightly.)*

KING. I please you most royally. Do I not? *(They kiss.)*

WOMAN. Yes, sire. Most royally. But no king has ever promised me a pageant, and I am so very fond of grand *divertissements*. I await a royal gesture, one which symbolizes the “depth” of your interest in me. *(She moves away again.)* It is then that I might fully give myself to you. In every way.

KING. You command a high price. But I will comply, as I do not make idle promises—and so that our amorous trysts may continue unhindered. Hide behind the screen.

*(He spans her; she giggles. She hides behind the dressing screen R. She is no longer visible. The KING throws on a robe over his dressing shirt and SOUND: rings a bell. The young male SERVANT enters.)*

SERVANT. Yes, sire?

KING. Send Molière in.

SERVANT *(gasps, looks around)*. In here, sire?

KING. Yes.

SERVANT. But—

KING. *Immédiatement. Tout de suite.* *(The SERVANT bows and exits. The WOMAN giggles. The KING peeks over the screen.)* Silence, vixen!

*(The KING sits back down, and reads the parchment. The SERVANT re-enters, this time with MOLIÈRE, who is formally dressed and wigged; he appears somewhat discomfited at being given audience in the KING's private quarters.)*

MOLIÈRE *(bowing)*. Your Majesty. As ever, it is an honor to be summoned to the court. *(Looking around.)* And such a complete surprise to be shown to your royal bed-chamber. I never dreamt I would see the private night realms of the Sun King.

KING. Greetings, Molière. Nor did I ever dream of inviting you here. Alas, time is of the essence today.

MOLIÈRE. Ah, I see. You dress in haste for some important function. Perhaps an audience with emissaries from Spain? Or Austria?

KING. A hard and pressing engagement awaits me, indeed. Now, quickly, I wish to discuss this query you sent to the court concerning the next royal dramatic commission. *(He holds up the parchment.)*

MOLIÈRE. As you wish. My life is the court's to purvey.

KING. Is it true that you are writing a new drama about that delightful fable which gives allegorical form to the travails of love, with the most famous lovers of all time— *(reads from the parchment:)* “The Myth of Cupid and Psyché”?

MOLIÈRE. Your Highness. Yes! *(He bows again.)* I have finished an outline of the scenes for the entertainment, and if it pleases the court, our troop will have the comedy-ballet mounted three months from now, with our usual players, music by Lulli, lyrics by Quinault. It is

the most popular love story, from the Greek fables collected by Apuleius in his book *The Golden Ass*.

KING (*eyes the screen*). *The Golden Ass*. It conjures many vivid images.

MOLIÈRE. In which the god Cupid falls in love with the most beautiful mortal woman on earth: Psyché.

KING. A handsome god in love with a luscious commoner. Yes. That one. Very good. I would like it completed at once. Before Lent.

MOLIÈRE. C-c-completed?

KING. Yes, as in finished and mounted. In a month. For the special Lenten carnival pageants at the Tuileries. Surely that is appropriate.

MOLIÈRE (*aghast*). Oh, yes, of course, sire! As you wish. But I have only just begun it. I have not even one act of five. Four weeks! I don't know if it is humanly possible, even for a man of great productivity, and some would say genius, such as myself. Perhaps in six weeks or two months... (*A beat.*)

KING (*sternly*). If you are not so inclined, then there are other poets who might be. Corneille, or...Racine.

MOLIÈRE (*icily*). Racine?

KING. The queen is rather fond of his work at the moment. His popularity is unmistakably on the rise.

*(The screen moves slightly. MOLIÈRE notices it.)*

MOLIÈRE. Oh, dear. Is the queen here as well? (*He bows to the screen.*) Your Highness.

KING (*brushes off his robe*). The queen is—indisposed. (*He clears his throat.*)

MOLIÈRE. I would hate to disappoint you. (*Turns to the screen.*) And the queen. (*Back to the KING:*) I will summon my strength. I will...find a way to complete the play and perform it in four weeks.

KING. I thank you, Molière. Here at the royal court, we shall anticipate it eagerly.

MOLIÈRE. I will start it at once, Your Highness.

KING. My secretary will be in touch about the specifics of the pageant, and the disbursement of the commission monies. Spare no expense. Make the cast size the largest yet!

MOLIÈRE. Truly? How large?

KING. Three hundred people at least! A grand spectacle. And now, alas, Molière. I have other business to attend of deep, deep consequence.

MOLIÈRE (*bows*). Yes, sire. Again, my utmost, utmost gratitude. *Adieu.* (*He exits.*)

*(Smiling, the WOMAN seductively comes out from behind the screen, wearing the sheet as a toga. They kiss passionately.)*

KING. I take it you are pleased, my love. Just wait.

*(She smiles. Tableau. They freeze in a sexy embrace. CROSSFADE TO SPOTLIGHT on MOLIÈRE. He addresses the audience directly.)*

MOLIÈRE.

There is no possibility, no earthly way,  
That I can, in two fortnights, write and mount this play.  
And who was there behind the dressing screen?



I'll wager some young lovely, but not the queen.  
No doubt, another plaything waiting to be mounted.  
How can I tell my troop? They, too, will doubt it:  
On one hand, a expression of the king's will.  
On the other, a commission impossible to fulfill.  
But I must do it, to stop that dolt Racine,  
Whose star ever rises while mine loses sheen.  
Who can help me versify? Who will supply aid?  
Ahhh! I must to work at once, and end this tirade.

(BLACKOUT.)

### SCENE THREE

*That evening. The LIGHTS FADE UP on a sitting room. MOLIÈRE and MRS. ARMANDE MOLIÈRE, a pretty woman, sit on a divan, though not next to each other. There is a fireplace indicated near the divan, and a small table. An awkward silence. Then:*

ARMANDE. Quite a surprise for you to dine with us with no word in advance.

MOLIÈRE. Not an unpleasant surprise, I hope. I am her father, after all.

ARMANDE. Of course. *Esprit-Madeleine* is only five, and since her birthday, you've hardly seen her. (*Softly:*) This time of year is always difficult—

MOLIÈRE (*gently*). Armande, I know the winter reminds you of our late son—

ARMANDE (*abruptly*). But I do not wish to have a discussion about the state of our marriage just now. Nothing has changed between us.

MOLIÈRE. Oh. (*A beat.*) But how long can we live apart—

ARMANDE. Until I feel that you do really care enough to behave differently, or one of us loves another—

MOLIÈRE. I do care. And I don't want to love another—

ARMANDE (*crosses to fireplace*). You have odd ways of showing your affections for me—what with strange private excursions to the countryside, to which I was never invited. (*She sighs.*) Our whole arrangement was so unusual to begin with. I don't know what we were thinking. (*Pause.*) I am not my mother.

MOLIÈRE. No, no. I am not still in love with your mother. And the only thing I ever do in the countryside is write! I was the luckiest man in Paris on our wedding day, and it was because I loved *you*. I have always loved you, from the moment I first saw you.

ARMANDE. I loved you on our wedding day. With all my heart.

MOLIÈRE (*crosses to her*). Then why don't we try again to—

ARMANDE (*turning away*). Because...because I don't believe you have suffered enough to be truly remorseful.

MOLIÈRE. Oh, I'm suffering. Cuckolds are ridiculed daily in Parisian society. Although when one lives in another household, away from one's spouse, it does modify the definition somewhat, I should think. For example, let's imagine: if you, my wife, are "occupied" with another man today, am I really cuckolded, since we are officially separated?

ARMANDE (*coolly*). I am not “occupied” with anyone else at the moment.

MOLIÈRE (*equally chilly*). The cuckoo is a bird with strange mating habits. The females lay their eggs in the nests of other birds and expect those birds to care for their children. Imagine how confused the male cuckoos must be, alone without nests.

ARMANDE (*returns his gaze directly*). There are flirtations, of course. But don’t write another jealousy play just yet. (*A beat.*)

MOLIÈRE. All right. (*New subject:*) But Armande, I need your help with something rather extraordinary. Tomorrow...I’ve invited old Corneille for morning tea in order to beg him to become my writing partner.

ARMANDE (*alarmed*). You did what?

MOLIÈRE. I need you to be there, my love. Serve pastries. Pretend to be my wife.

ARMANDE. Why on earth did you summon him? You have no need for a writing partner!

MOLIÈRE (*rising*). The king challenges me with an impossible deadline, and so, lamentably, I require a collaborator. The king exacts his revenge indirectly in this test of wills we call “patronage.” But he will not best me. And our company needs the commission. Darling, you are going to portray Psyché, the most beautiful woman in the world, in love with the god Cupid! A five-act ballet extravaganza at the *Tuileries*. A cast of three hundred!

ARMANDE (*pleased*). Oh! That is wonderful news!

MOLIÈRE. That is, if we can convince old Corneille to join the cause. I can’t versify alone in time.

ARMANDE. When would we perform it?

MOLIÈRE. For the Lenten carnivale.

ARMANDE (*gasps*). Impossible! Even for you. Even for you and Corneille together! We should begin rehearsals tomorrow!

MOLIÈRE. Have faith. There's life left in this man yet.

ARMANDE. The task is Herculean!

MOLIÈRE. I have yet to write a part which presents you as the living goddess you are. This pageant will be a paean to your beauty. Armande, only *you* are lovely enough to challenge Venus herself. We will have giant machines! You will float up to the sky in Act Five in the arms of handsome Cupid!

ARMANDE (*claps her hands*). Machines! I have always wanted to fly in a machine. (*A beat.*) Well, tomorrow then. What would you have me do?

MOLIÈRE. I would have you love me, Armande. But short of that, come by tomorrow morning. Wear your red dress.

*(He kisses her on the cheek. ARMANDE exits. CROSS-FADE TO SPOT on MOLIÈRE:)*

MOLIÈRE (*grumbling*).

What convinced her? Love? No. Stage machines!  
The chance to float above the king and queen.  
Her coldness serves to break my heart.  
It was folly to marry Armande Béjart.  
And the twenty-year age gap inflames the divide.  
When a wife moves out, it destroys a man's pride.  
But this play is my chance to win her back.  
The desire I have, good rhymes I lack.  
If Corneille will help me versify,  
Then Armande might decide to reunify!

(BLACKOUT)