

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

A decorative border with a repeating pattern of stylized, symmetrical motifs, possibly representing a classical architectural element like a scroll or a shell, framing the text.

A Doctor in Spite of Himself

By Molière
Adapted by Aurand Harris

Full-length Version

A Doctor in Spite of Himself

Sharpened version of a charming French classic, adapted for today's producing groups.

Comedy. Freely adapted by Aurand Harris from Molière. Cast: 9m., 10w. Sganarelle, a shiftless woodcutter, quarrels with his wife, Martine, who vows to get even with him. Her chance comes when she meets two servants in search of a doctor to cure their master's daughter. Martine recommends her husband in the most glowing terms, as a doctor who can perform miracles, but warns them that he will have to be beaten into it. Armed with slapsticks, the two men hail Sganarelle as a great doctor, whack him roundly whenever he attempts to deny it, and thus force him into becoming a doctor in spite of himself. Fortunately, the master's daughter is only shamming illness to avoid a distasteful marriage. When Sganarelle is able to unite her with her own true love, she is miraculously cured—and Dr. Sganarelle is richly rewarded. *Three sets. Seventeenth-century French costumes—or modern, if you prefer. Code: DB6.*

ISBN-10 1-58342-759-7
ISBN-13 978-1-58342-759-0



9 781583 427590 >
A Doctor in Spite of Himself
(full-length version)



Dramatic Publishing

311 Washington St.
Woodstock, IL 60098-330
ph: 800-448-7469

www.dramaticpublishing.com

A DOCTOR IN SPITE OF HIMSELF

Freely Adapted
by

AURANDHARRIS

From

MOLIÈRE

Full-length Version



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

*** 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, 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. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

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

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.

© MCMLXIII by
THE ANCHORAGE PRESS, INC.

Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved

(A DOCTOR IN SPITE OF HIMSELF)

ISBN: 978-1-58342-759-0

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(In order of appearance)

PROLOGUE

SGANARELLE, a woodcutter

MARTINE, his wife

ROBERT, a neighbor

VALERE, a servant of Geronte

LUCAS, another servant

SUZANNE, a maid of Geronte

LOUISE, second maid

NICOLE, third maid

JEANNE, fourth maid

JACQUELINE, wife of Lucas

GERONTE, a rich gentleman

LUCINDE, his daughter

LEANDRE, a young gentleman

HENRIETTE, first sick patient

MARGUERITE, second sick patient

ALBERT, third sick patient

THIBAUT, an old man

PERRIN, his son

SCENE:

France, 1600

The play is in two acts.

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the author(s) 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(s) *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 the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author(s), 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.

A DOCTOR IN SPITE OF HIMSELF

Act One

(Music. Prologue enters and stands in front of the main curtain.)

PROLOGUE. Bonjour, Mesdames—et mesdemoiselles! Bonjour Messieurs. Bonjour les enfants. Welcome! Proudly I announce our play, a most comic comedy written by our famous M. Moliere. You will see two lovers who are separated, but who find each other—ah, l'amour . . . l'amour . . . l'amour. A crafty father who is finally outwitted—ah, la, justice . . . la justice! And a woodcutter who because of his cunning wife becomes—a doctor in spite of himself. And that is the title of the play—A Doctor In Spite of Himself. Now with three raps on the floor—

(Three raps are heard off-stage.)

Our play begins.

(Bows, curtain opens with music. There is a painted cut-out tree standing at R, large enough for an actor to be concealed behind.)

Our first scene is in the woods. It is a beautiful day—with the bright sun shining on a green tree on whose branches a bird sits—

(In the top of the tree at the side, a hand-puppet bird appears and flutters its wings.)

and sings happily—in French.

(Bird flutters wildly and a bird whistle trills loudly.)

Into this happy scene comes Sganarelle—a woodcutter—our hero—followed by his little dove, his loving wife.

(Prologue bows and exits R. Bird chirps again as Sganarelle, followed by Martine enter L. They walk angrily to C, and stop. Bird stops and disappears.)

SGANARELLE. Be quiet, quiet, quiet woman. I am the master.

MARTINE. I will not be quiet, quiet, quiet. I will be heard.

SGANARELLE *(Aside).* Oh, the misery of married life.

MARTINE *(Aside).* Oh, the misery to be married to a stupid husband.

SGANARELLE. How right the great Aristotle was when he said: a wife is the devil in disguise.

MARTINE. What does a woodcutter know about Aristotle?

SGANARELLE. My little wife, I am a husband to be proud of? Six years I served a famous doctor. I learned by heart his Latin grammar.

(Poses and speaks loudly and proudly.)

Cabricius arci thuram, catalamus, singulariter, numerum et casus.

MARTINE. Yes, doctor woodcutter . . . doctor blockhead! A curse on the day and on the hour when I went to church with you and said, "I will."

SGANARELLE. And a curse on the Magistrate who made me swear away my freedom.

MARTINE. You should thank heaven every minute of your life that you have me for your wife.

SGANARELLE. Thank you? You were the lucky one when you got me.

MARTINE. Lucky! To marry a man who only works his mouth, a scoundrel who eats me out of house and home.

SGANARELLE *(Aside)*. Not true. I drink as well as eat.

MARTINE. Who has sold every stick of furniture in the house.

SGANARELLE. That is living on one's means.

MARTINE. Who has taken the very bed from under me.

SGANARELLE. You rise in the mornings earlier.

MARTINE. Who hasn't left a single thing in the whole house.

SGANARELLE. All the easier when you move.

MARTINE. A husband who does nothing but talk and carouse from morning to night.

SGANARELLE. That's to keep up my spirits.

MARTINE. Do you think things will go on like this forever and ever and ever?

SGANARELLE. Now little wife, calm yourself—

MARTINE. Do you think I am going to put up with this forever and ever and ever?

SGANARELLE *(Aside)*. She is slightly annoyed.

MARTINE. Do you think I don't know how to bring you to your senses?

SGANARELLE. I know, my little wife, that you know that I have a strong right arm!

(Holds it up.)

MARTINE. And so do I!

(Holds it up.)

SGANARELLE. I can see you are itching for a fight.

MARTINE. I can scratch any itching you can give.

SGANARELLE. You are asking for beating.

MARTINE. Ha! You are afraid of your own shadow.

(Walks away.)

SGANARELLE. Am I?

MARTINE *(Comes to him)*. Beat me. Beat me! If you dare!

SGANARELLE. Ah, so you force me—

MARTINE. Scoundrel! Beggar! Villain!

SGANARELLE. A switch!

(He goes to side of tree. From behind the tree a green hand is extended and hands him a slap-stick. They shake hands.)

MARTINE. Rascal! Thief! Doctor Blockhead!

(He beats her with the slap-stick. It is a fast and funny scene. She jumps and yells. He looks at the audience between the whacks and grins. She stands and rubs her hip.)

SGANARELLE *(Aside)*. That is the way to quiet a wife.

ROBERT *(Enters from L, an old man)*. Hello . . . Hello? What is all this. Sganarelle beating his wife.

(Crosses to Sganarelle, stands between husband and wife.)

Disgraceful behavior. Come. Come. Enough. You are a scoundrel, monsieur, to beat your wife.

MARTINE. What did you call him?

ROBERT. He is a scoundrel, a villain, a rascal—

MARTINE *(Slaps Robert downstage)*. Don't you call my husband names.

ROBERT. But he beat you—like a rascal—

(She slaps him upstage.)

like a villain—

(She slaps him downstage.)

like a—

(He hides on the other side of Sganarelle.)

MARTINE. Suppose I want him to beat me?

ROBERT. Ah, then it is his pleasure.

MARTINE. Is it any of your business?

ROBERT. None at all.

MARTINE. (*Aside*). Imagine if everyone went around stopping husbands from beating wives.

ROBERT. I apologize.

MARTINE. What right have you for butting in?

ROBERT. None at all.

MARTINE. Then mind your own business.

ROBERT. I won't say another word.

MARTINE. I like being beaten.

ROBERT (*To Sganarelle*). I beg your pardon, my friend. Carry on. Hit her! Whack her to your heart's content. I'll be happy to give you a hand.

SGANARELLE. No. I don't want to now.

ROBERT. Ah, a pity.

SGANARELLE. I'll beat her when I choose.

ROBERT. Soon, I hope.

SGANARELLE (*Suddenly angry*). She's my wife, not yours.

ROBERT. Happily, yes!

SGANARELLE. I'll do as I want. Not as you say.

ROBERT. Of course . . . of course . . .

SGANARELLE (*Ready to strike him*). And I don't need your help.

ROBERT. I was being neighborly.

SGANARELLE. Good neighbors do not interfere in other neighbor's business. Remember what Cicero said: do not put the bark of a tree between the trunk and your finger.

(*Starts hitting Robert with slap-stick, as Robert runs off L, crying for help.*)

Remember! Remember! Remember!

(*He gives slap-stick back to "tree." They touch hands. He smiles at wife.*)

Our quarrel is over.

MARTINE (*Smiles*). Over.

SGANARELLE. What was it about?

MARTINE. I have forgotten.

SGANARELLE. Your hand.

MARTINE (*Flirting*). No.

SGANARELLE. Eh?

MARTINE. No.

SGANARELLE. My dear little wife.

MARTINE. No.

SGANARELLE. Come, come, come!

MARTINE. No.

(Remembers and becomes angry again.)

I remember now. I was annoyed.

SGANARELLE. It was nothing. Come.

MARTINE. Let me be.

SGANARELLE. Touch hands I tell you!

MARTINE. You treated me badly.

SGANARELLE *(Shouts)*. All right. I treated you badly. But touch hands!

MARTINE. Say you are sorry.

SGANARELLE. I'm sorry!

MARTINE. I forgive you.

(They hold hands. She aside.)

But I'll pay him back for hitting me—*(Rubs hip)* so hard.

SGANARELLE *(Aside)*. A few blows between husband and wife—now and then—prove that it is a happy marriage.

(To wife.)

Now, little wife, I'm off to bundle firewood, and I promise you I shall return with a hundred sticks and more. You shall be proud of the husband you got when you said in church, I will.

(Sings, as he exits L.)

See me lift my little bottle
Hear the gurgle in my throttle . . .

MARTINE *(Looks after him)*. Be off with you. And I'm not forgetting—no matter what happy face I wear—how I feel.

(Aside.)

Oh, if I could find some means of paying him back for the beating he gave me, I'd do it! I'd do it to show him what a loving wife I am. Now what could I do to make him know I—*(Savagely)* Truly—*(Tenderly)* love him

(Sits and thinks.)

(Valere and Lucas enter from L. Both are servants. Valere affects a grand manner and Lucas is a country bumpkin.)

VALERE. We will rest here and catch our breath.

LUCAS. It's a fool's errand we're sent on . . . a fool's errand. And how is it going to help us? What are you and I going to get out of it? Nothing . . . nothing . . . nothing.

VALERE. We must obey the master. He has sent us. We will go. And I am deeply concerned for the health of the master's daughter.

LUCAS. Now there's a strange sickness . . . a most sudden peculiar sickness.

VALERE. But don't you see - - - if her sickness can be cured, she will marry Horace - - and Horace is very rich - - - and very free with his money - - - so if you and I can fetch a doctor who can cure the master's daughter - - -

LUCAS. And she marries Horace - - -

VALERE. Our errand will be worth a great deal to us.

LUCAS. That's just what I said! We'll get something out of it. Something . . . something . . . something.

MARTINE *(To herself)*. Think . . . think how he beat you. Think how to get even with him.

VALERE. Of course the master's daughter has a fancy to marry another - - - young Leandre.

LUCAS. And if she marries him, we'll get nothing . . . nothing . . . nothing.

VALERE. She will marry Horace. The master will never consent for her to marry young - - - poor - - - Leandre.

LUCAS. Ah, how wise is our good master.

VALERE. So now we will continue on our errand and find a wondrous doctor who can cure the master's daughter.

LUCAS. So she can marry Horace.

VALERE. And they will live richly ever after.

LUCAS. And so will we!

MARTINE *(Rises. To herself)*. There must be some way I can make him feel a good whack.

(Curtsies to her imaginary husband, while Valere and Lucas bow to each other.)

To show my dear husband my tender love.

(She and Valere, bowing, back into each other.)

Oh, I beg your pardon, gentlemen. I was thinking - - - how I could find - - - what I'm looking for.

VALERE (*Bowing grandly to her*). Ah, madame, we too are looking - - - for what we are trying to find.

MARTINE. If I can be of help, gentlemen, in your search - - -

LUCAS. We are looking for a doctor.

MARTINE. A doctor?

VALERE. A most clever doctor who can cure our master's daughter. She has been affected with a strange malady which has suddenly made her speechless. All the doctors nearby have tried - - - and failed.

LUCAS. They've run out of physic and rhubarb. They've even run out of Latin.

MARTINE. (*Looks off L*). Latin . . .

VALERE. One hears sometimes of an obscure doctor who has his own remarkable secrets - - -

MARTINE (*Nods*). A doctor . . .

VALERE. Who has his own special remedies - - -

MARTINE (*Nods*). Who speaks Latin . . .

VALERE (*Nods*). We are seeking such a doctor.

LUCAS. And we will find him!

MARTINE. Gentlemen, your search is over! The doctor is here!

VALERE. Here?

MARTINE (*Aside*). I have thought of a way that my husband will feel the sting of a stick!

VALERE. Madame, if this doctor be true, you - - - you are an angel.

MARTINE. No, monsieur, it is you who wear the wings.

VALERE. Where shall we find him?

MARTINE. He is there - - -

(*Points R. They look.*)

cutting wood.

LUCAS. A doctor - - - cutting wood?

VALERE. No doubt he is gathering helpful herbs.

MARTINE. No - - - cutting wood. Oh, I must warn you, he is a very extraordinary man. You will not think he is a doctor. He does not look like one, dress like one, or act like one. In fact, he will tell you he is *not* a doctor.

VALERE. Odd. But often the greater the man the more fool he is with little quirks.

MARTINE. Oh, he is a great fool all right. As great as he is a doctor.

VALERE. We shall find him.

(They nod and start.)

MARTINE *(Stops them)*. First, I must tell you there is only one way in which you can make him say he is a doctor. You see he doesn't want anyone to know of his magic cures. He will not help you. He will do nothing. He will not admit he is a doctor - - - unless - - -

VALERE. Unless - - -

LUCAS. Unless - - -

MARTINE. Unless you take a stick - - - and whack him!

(Goes to tree.)

Beat him - - - beat him until he admits in the end what he denied in the beginning.

(“Tree” hands her a slap-stick.)

VALERE. Beat him?

MARTINE. With a stick.

(Holds up slap-stick.)

LUCAS *(Takes stick and swings it)*. I can do that!

VALERE *(Takes second slap-stick which “Tree” has given to Martine and which she gives to Valere)*. And I - - - if he will cure the master's daughter.

MARTINE. Cure? Ah, miracles he has performed! Six months ago there was a woman - - - dead the doctors said - - - dead. And just as they were going to bury her, this doctor was made - - - by beating - - - to attend the body. He looked at the dead woman, put something in her mouth, and lo and behold - - - up she rose from the dead - - - and started dusting the room.

VALERE. Ah.

LUCAS. Ah.

MARTINE. Ah-ha! And - - - just three months ago a boy fell from the top of the bell tower - - - down - - - down - - -

(She looks away to avoid seeing him crash.)

His head was smashed, his arms, his hands, his chest, his legs, his toes. The people made this doctor - - - by beating him - - - cure the boy. He rubbed, with an oil he'd mixed, the boy's head, his arms, his hands, his chest, his legs, his toes, and - - - up the boy jumped and started whistling.

LUCAS. Ah.

VALERE. Ah.

MARTINE. Ha-ha!

VALERE. Surely he must know the secret of the Universal Remedy.

LUCAS. Quick, after him! Before someone else takes him away.

VALERE. What is his name?

MARTINE. He is called Sganarelle.

VALERE. And what is his appearance?

MARTINE. He has a stupid face, but do not let that stop you. He wears a green and yellow coat. His talk is loud - - - sprinkled well with Latin words, and he swings his arms with a painful whack.

VALERE. He will not escape us. Thank you, madame. You have found for us what we were wishing for.

MARTINE. Thank you, monsieur. You are going to do what I was wishing to be done.

(Aside.)

We will soon see if he is a doctor hard to beat!

(She exits L.)

VALERE. Come. We will find the doctor.

(They nod and start "walking" facing R. They walk in the same spot, looking about, as the Tree moves toward L. There is music. They stop, Tree stops, Music stops.)

Surely this doctor will cure the silent tongue of the master's daughter.

(They nod. Music starts. They "walk." Tree moves. All stop.)

Surely then she will marry Horace.

(They nod. Music starts. They "walk." Tree moves. All stop.)

Surely then he will reward us generously for fetching such a remarkable doctor.

LUCAS. And all we have to do is whack him.

(Swings stick. They nod. Music starts. They "walk." Tree moves. All stop.)

VALERE. Listen. Someone is chopping wood.

LUCAS. A woodchopper!

VALERE. Could it be . . . ?

LUCAS. Can it be . . . ?

VALERE. He comes this way. Quick . . . hide . . . we will see.

(They look about, see tree, hurry toward it, each circles around a different side and hide behind it. Sganarelle enters R.)

SGANARELLE. Two big bundles of sticks deserve one little refreshing drink.

(Holds up small bottle. Sings.)

See me lift my little bottle,
Hear the gurgle in my throttle.
Ah! how folk would envy me,
Think how happy I should be
If every time I took a pull
I still found my bottle full,
Ah! how happy I should be
Alas, why can't it really be?

(Starts to take a drink, but discovers the bottle is empty. Shakes it, upside down.)

Empty. A little wine before a meal, which I don't have, or a little wine after a meal - - - which I don't have, would improve the enjoyment of that meal - - - which I don't have.

VALERE. *(Peeks from one side of tree)*. He wears a green and yellow coat.

LUCAS *(Peeks from other side of tree.)* He wears a stupid look.

SGANARELLE *(Looks longingly at bottle, Sings)*.

. . . If every time I took a pull
I still found my bottle full,
Ah, how happy I should be
Alas, why can't it really be?

(Shakes bottle angrily and vigorously.)

VALERE. He whacks his arms about.

LUCAS. He speaks in a loud voice.

SGANARELLE. Cabricius arci thuram, catalamus, singulariter, numerum et casus!

VALERE *(He and Lucas come around from each side of tree)*. He speaks in Latin!

LUCAS. In Latin!

(They embrace wildly.)

VALERE. It is the doctor!

SGANARELLE. What two long legged birds do I see? And - - - they are looking at me.

VALERE. I can feel his greatness.