

Excerpt Terms & 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 of scripts.

Family Plays

Molière's
**THE SCHOOL
FOR HUSBANDS**

Adapted by
I.E. Clark



THE SCHOOL FOR HUSBANDS

“The production was by far the most rewarding of my three-year teaching-directing career. Your adaptations are delightful to stage.” (Arlington, Texas)

Comedy. Adapted by I.E. Clark. Based on the play by Molière. Cast: 6m., 3w., 1 either gender. *The School for Husbands* is a fascinating way to introduce Molière to literature classes, as well as being a superb contest play. Ugly, stingy old Sganarelle wants to marry his ward, pretty young Isabelle, but she loves handsome Valere. So the young ones flirt behind the old one’s back and make a fool of him. Sganarelle is an unpleasant old man who thinks parents and guardians should be stern, keeping young people locked up and closely guarded. His brother, Ariste, believes in giving young people freedom. Sganarelle is so old that he wobbles. Nevertheless, he plans to marry the beautiful Isabelle, who is so young that she has never been kissed. Isabelle is horrified at the idea of being wed to this repulsive creature. Her heart quivers for the handsome young Valere, but how do you let a man know you’re interested in him when an old goat like Sganarelle keeps a suspicious eye on you every second? Isabelle may be young, but she’s not dumb. The tricks she dreams up to get messages to Valere make one of the cleverest plots in theatre history. Only a master craftsman like Molière could create as much fun as this play provides and still get across an important message. As this character sketch implies, Molière’s play might have been written in the 20th-century, but the original five-act version of *The School for Husbands* was presented for the first time on June 24, 1661, in the Theatre du Palais-Royal in Paris. The play was immediately successful. Critics praised its “comic vim” and its “charming style.” This version is presented not to replace the original, but to give producers an opportunity to present the play in situations where the full version won’t work—like one-act play contests, club meetings, assembly programs and classroom presentation. This short version provides an introduction to the delights of Molière’s plays that will make its audiences eager for more of his works. A director’s script is available containing drawings of costumes and set, details on all technical aspects of staging, and discussion of characterization, plot and theme. It also suggests the complete blocking and full stage directions for all movement and business. *Set: street area in 17th-century France. Costumes: period. Approximate running time: 30 to 40 minutes. Code: SX3.*

Family Plays

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098-3308
Phone: (800) 448-7469 / (815) 338-7170
Fax: (800) 334-5302 / (815) 338-8981

www.FamilyPlays.com

ISBN-13 978-0-88680-169-4



9 780886 801694 >

The School for Husbands

The School for Husbands

Family Plays

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098

© Family Plays

*** NOTICE ***

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by FAMILY PLAYS 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.FamilyPlays.com, or we may be contacted by mail at: FAMILY PLAYS, 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.

© 1966 by
I.E. CLARK

Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(THE SCHOOL FOR HUSBANDS)

ISBN: 978-0-88680-169-4

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
Family Plays of Woodstock, Illinois”

THE SCHOOL FOR HUSBANDS

Characters

Sganarelle

Ariste, *his brother*

Isabelle, *his ward*

Leonor, *her sister*

Lisette, *Leonor's maid*

Valere

Ergaste, *Valere's valet*

A Notary

*A Lackey

A Lamplighter

**This role may be played by a man or a woman, or may be omitted*

A street in a residential area; the seventeenth century

NOTES ON THE PLAY

Sganarelle is an unpleasant old man who thinks parents and guardians should be stern, keeping young people locked up and closely guarded. His brother Ariste believes in giving young people freedom. As this capsule character sketch implies, Moliere's play might have been written in the twentieth century; but, as a matter of fact, it was first produced in 1661.

Sganarelle is so old that he wobbles. Nevertheless, he plans to marry his beautiful ward Isabelle, who is so young that she has never been kissed. Isabelle is horrified at the idea of being wedded to this repulsive creature. Her heart quivers for a handsome young fellow named Valere. But how do you let a man know you're interested in him when an old goat like Sganarelle keeps a suspicious eye on you every second?

Isabelle may be young, but she's not dumb. The tricks she dreams up to get messages to Valere make one of the cleverest plots in theatre history. Only a master craftsman like Moliere could create as much fun as this play provides and still get across an important message.

The original five-act version of **THE SCHOOL FOR HUSBANDS** was presented for the first time on June 24, 1661, in the Theatre du Palais-Royal in Paris, and the play was immediately successful. Critics praised its "comic vim" and its "charming style." This 35-minute version is presented not to replace the original, but to give producers an opportunity to present the play in situations where the full version won't work—like one-act play contests, club meetings, assembly programs, and classroom presentation.

This short version provides an introduction to the delights of Moliere's plays that will make its audiences eager for more of his works.



Director's Script Available

The stage directions in this acting edition have been kept to a minimum to give actors freedom to invent their own business. Full stage directions, plus costume sketches, suggestions for scenery, a discussion of the historical background, and many other aids, are included in the Director's Production Script (prompt book) available from the publisher.

Molière's

The School for Husbands

(*L'École des Maris*)

Adapted by I. E. Clark

Curtain opens on an empty stage. Sganarelle's house is at Stage Right and Valère's at Stage Left. An imaginary street runs just behind the two houses, from Right to Left, parallel with the footlights. At Up Center is an intersection with another imaginary street running perpendicularly down to the footlights. At the UC intersection is a street lamp and a bench. Facades of other houses may form a background for the stage; or a cyclorama may be used. In either case, there should be an opening UC through which the street continues. See Introduction to Production Script for diagrams of stage set and suggestions for a simple way to construct the houses.

[LISETTE and LÉONOR enter up center and tiptoe to Sganarelle's door. LEONOR tries the door, finds it unlocked, and both enter. A brief moment later LISETTE opens the door from inside, peeps out, sees that the streets are still empty, steps onstage, and motions to the others to follow her. ISABELLE steps cautiously through the door, followed by LEONOR.]

LEONOR. [*To Isabelle*] I'll take all the blame upon myself in case he scolds you.

LISETTE. [*To Isabelle*] Poor dear—the way he locks you in the house—never lets you see a soul!

ISABELLE. That's his way. [*They begin strolling toward DL.*]

LEONOR. I pity you, my sister.

LISETTE. [*To Leonor*] Lucky for you his brother's nature is of another sort. Fate has been kind, Mademoiselle

Leonor, to let you fall into more reasonable hands.

ISABELLE. The wonder is he did not lock me up today, or take me with him.

LISETTE. Faith! I'd send him to the devil, him and his key, and his—

[*SGANARELLE enters talking loudly as he leads ARISTE toward DL. He does not see the ladies.*]

SGANARELLE. Please, brother, I'm very content with my way of life.

ARISTE. But others condemn it.

SGAN. Yes, fools like yourself.

ARISTE. Brother, a thousand thanks; the compliment is kind.

SGAN. [*Sees Isabelle*] Isabelle! Where are you going, if I may ask?

LEONOR. [*Stepping in his path as he approaches Isabelle*] We don't know yet; I urged my sister to come out with us, to enjoy this lovely weather.

SGAN. I wasn't speaking to you. You can go where you like; [*pointing to Lisette*] you can gad everywhere, the pair of you. [*Pushes Lisette and Leonor out of the way with his cane and steps to Isabelle*] But you, I have forbidden you to leave the house.

ARISTE. Brother! let them amuse themselves.

SGAN. Thanks for your advice.

ARISTE. Youth needs—

SGAN. Youth is foolish. And so, too often is old age.

ARISTE. What harm can come to her with Leonor?

SGAN. She is better off with me. I know the care I ought to take of her.

ARISTE. Have I less interest in her sister's conduct?

SGAN. Oh heavens, Ariste! Let us each act as we please. These sisters have no parents; their father, on his dying bed, committed them to you and me, charging us to marry them. Or, if we refused, to dispose of them to others, giving us, meanwhile, the power of father and husband over them. You took the charge of Leonor, I of Isabelle. You govern

yours as you think best; leave me, I beg of you, to rule the other as I choose.

ARISTE. It seems to me—

SGAN. It seems to me that on this point it is best to be explicit. You let your ward be gay and dress her daintily—well, so be it! She has a maid and a lackey; I consent. She gads about, loves laziness, and is at liberty to dally with the sparks. I say no word against it. But I intend that mine shall live in my way, not in hers. She shall wear black except on holy-days; shut up at home she must, like every virtuous woman, attend to household matters; in her spare moments mend my linen or knit my socks; she must, moreover, close her ears to the talk of dandies and never leave the house except with someone to keep watch upon her. Flesh is weak! I know its dangers; her luck declares that she shall marry me; therefore I'm bound to answer for her, body and soul.

ISABELLE. You have no reason, as I think, to—

SGAN. Hold your tongue! I'll teach you to go out without me!

LEONOR. But, Monsieur Sganarelle—

SGAN. Madame, it is not to you I'm speaking; [*mocking*] *you are too virtuous!*

LEONOR. Do you object that she should be with me?

SGAN. Yes, I do, to speak frankly.

LEONOR. Will you allow my heart to speak as plainly? I do not know how she may view all this, but I know what my feelings are: Your behavior to her could not possibly make her love you.

LISETTE. In fact, this care you talk of is a shameful thing! Our honor, Monsieur, must be weak indeed to need such constant watching.

LEONOR. If by a husband I were thus restrained, I'd feel a mighty longing to justify his fears!

SGAN. [*To Ariste*] Behold, my *fine* teacher, the result of your instructions!

ARISTE. Brother, such talk is only meant in jest. But there is truth in what they say. Your distrustful cares and

locks and bars can't make the virtue of our wives and daughters. It is a woman's heart we ought to win.

SGAN. All that is idle talk.

ARISTE. So be it. In my care of Leonor, I have not made crimes of little freedoms. I would rather see her married to another than let her hand be given to me against her will.

SGAN. Hey! how sweet he is! sugar and honey both! But her actions will not suit you when the time comes to change her way of life.

ARISTE. Why should she change it?

SGAN. Why?

ARISTE. Yes.

SGAN. That I can't say.

ARISTE. Honor is not injured by it.

SGAN. What! If you marry her you mean to let her have the liberty we see her taking as a girl?

ARISTE. Why not?

SGAN. And allow her, with giddy brains, to go to balls and places of assembly?

ARISTE. Indeed I shall.

SGAN. And let young sparks invade your house?

ARISTE. What then?

SGAN. And play at cards and give her presents?

ARISTE. I consent.

SGAN. You're an old fool! [*Pushes ISABELLE into house*] Go on; you shall hear no more of these outrageous ideas. [*Locks door behind her.*]

ARISTE. I shall rely upon my wife's fidelity.

SGAN. [*To audience*] What pleasure I shall feel when his wife dupes him.

[*ARISTE and LEONOR laugh aloud and embrace.*]

SGAN. Oh, laugh away, old scoffer; what can be funnier than a sixty-year-old dupe?

LEONOR. I'll never make a dupe of him. He may be sure of that. But let me tell you that, if I were to be your wife, I would not pledge my soul to *you*. [*Exits DR.*]

LISETTE. No; conscience binds our souls to those who

trust us—but promises are empty words to such as *you*!

SGAN. [*Raises his cane and chases her offstage*] Hush! cursed tongue, ill-taught and insolent!

ARISTE. Brother, you brought that silly talk upon yourself. Adieu. Cast off this temper, and be warned that to lock up a wife is ill-advised. I am your humble servant. [*Bows and exits DR.*]

SGAN. I'm not yours! Ha! how well suited for each other! What a fine family they'll make—a ludicrous old man playing the dandy with a withered body; a masterful and most coquettish girl; impudent servants!

[*As he is speaking, ERGASTE and VALERE enter from Valere's house. They see SGANARELLE and stop just outside the door.*]

VALERE. There he is, Ergaste! that Argus whom I hate; the cruel guardian of the one I love. I'll try to make acquaintance with him. [*He bows low*]

SGAN. [*Thinking himself alone*] Isabelle would lose in their companionship the seeds of honor she has gained from me.

VALERE. He does not see it is to him I bow.

ERGASTE. Perhaps his worst eye is on this side; let us try the other. [*They X to Sganarelle's right just as SGANARELLE turns to his left.*]

SGAN. [*Listening, with his ear cocked to the left*] Who's there? [*Hearing and seeing nothing*] My ears are buzzing. [*He glances to his right and sees VALERE, who bows to him.*] Is that to me? What the devil! [*He turns away from Valere and sees ERGASTE, who has returned to Sganarelle's left and is imitating his master's bows.*] Another! What flourishing of hats!

VALERE. Monsieur Sganarelle, perhaps our salutations may disturb you.

SGAN. Perhaps they do.

VALERE. But indeed, the honor of your acquaintance would be to me so great a happiness that I was seized with a desire to salute you.