

Celebrating Australian Playwriting



Australian Script Centre



The Hypocrite

by Justin Fleming

EXTRACT

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Company

MADAME PERNELLE, Orgon's Mother
FLIPOTE, her maid servant
ORGON, Elmire's husband
ELMIRE, Orgon's wife
DAMIS, Orgon's son
MARIANE, Orgon's daughter, in love with Valère
DORINE, her maid
VALÈRE, in love with Mariane
CLÉANTE, Orgon's brother-in-law
TARTUFFE, a sanctimonious hypocrite
LAURENT, his valet
MONSIEUR LOYAL, a sergeant
FIGURE IN JUDGMENT
AN OFFICER

The setting throughout is Paris. The structure of the play allows for doubling of a number of roles.

A note on the rhyme scheme - Though Molière used rhyming couplets throughout, his audience was used to them, and in French they have less intensity. For variety's sake, and to give characters and themes their breathing space, in scenes about truth versus hypocrisy, the rhyming couplets are used. When the subject is true love, the rhymes are on alternate lines. And Tartuffe has his own rhetoric, so in moments driven by him, the rhymes fall on the first and fourth lines, and the second and third lines.

The Hypocrite had its first performance on 8 November, 2008, in the Playhouse, Victorian Arts Centre, Melbourne, produced by the Melbourne Theatre Company, with the following:

MADAME PERNELLE.....Kerry Walker
FLIPOTE.....James Wardlaw
ORGON.....Garry McDonanld
ELMIRE.....Marina Prior
DAMIS.....Chris Ryan
MARIANE.....Sara Gleeson
DORINE.....Mandy McElhinney
VALÈRE.....Ashley Zukerman
CLÉANTE.....Nicholas Bell
TARTUFFE.....Kim Gyngell
LAURENT.....Martin Sharpe
MONSIEUR LOYAL.....James Wardlaw
FIGURE IN JUDGMENT.....Bert Labonte
AN OFFICER.....Martin Sharpe

Director.....Peter Evans
Set & costume design.....Stephen Curtis
Lighting design.....Matt Scott
Composer.....Ian McDonald
Stage Manager.....Jessica Burns
Wig Mistress.....Jurga Celkiene

Map of Relationships

MADAME PERNELLE - FLIPOTE (her maid servant)

ORGON (her son) + *ELMIRE (Orgon's second wife)* + *CLÉANTE (Orgon's bro-in-law)*

DAMIS (son) + *MARIANE (daughter)* - *DORINE (Mariane's maid)*

VALÈRE (in love with Mariane)

TARTUFFE -

LAURENT (his valet)

ACT 1

Scene One

Madame PERNELLE, FLIPOTE, her maidservant, ELMIRE, MARIANE, DORINE, DAMIS and CLÉANTE.

PERNELLE: Come on, Flipote, get me out of this place.

ELMIRE: Just calm down - you set a cracking pace.

PERNELLE: Leave me, daughter-in-law, don't come any farther.
I could well do without all of your palaver.

ELMIRE: Whatever you want we will more than gladly do.
But why the hurried exit? What's got into you?

PERNELLE: I can no longer stand this wild menagerie;
I go to make a point - and someone starts to badger me;
Well: I have to say I've hated every minute;
This noisy house and everyone who's in it
Shows no respect - You treat the wise as fools;
And instead of order, it's all rafferty's rules.

DORINE: Perhaps -

PERNELLE: - You're a maid, dear. That is your job.
We'll get along nicely if you'll just shut your gob.
Your advice is not something I place any store on;

DAMIS: But -

PERNELLE: - And you, dearest boy, in a word, are a moron.
Now: I am your grandmother, and until in my coffin
I'll do the talking. I've told your father often
That he can call you all whatever he chooses
But to me, you're a miserable bunch of losers.

MARIANE: I must say -

PERNELLE: My God, Miss Perfect has spoken;
The sister of sweetness itself has awoken.
But they say that still waters are just an illusion:
Beneath the calm surface, she's awash with confusion.

ELMIRE: Now, Mother...

PERNELLE: My precious, don't take this to heart
But I have some advice which I wish to impart

To you: everything that you do is, well, dreadful.
You're supposed to set an example; but instead you'll
Do what their late mother would never do:
You over spend on fashions from the latest magazine,
And you swan about in Dolce, Galliano or McQueen.
You don't please a husband by the places you shop;
Can't you wear something less over-the-top?

CLEANTE: But Madame, after all ...

PERNELLE: I know you're her brother -
Whom I love and respect as much as another
Yet I must say if I were my daughter in law
There's no way you'd ever set foot in the door.
Your endless lessons on life ring so hollow;
The sort of crap only a cretin could follow.
Sorry to be blunt, but such is my manner;
A spade is a spade and a spanner, a spanner.

DAMIS: But you never find fault with our Monsieur Tartuffe...

PERNELLE: Now *there's* a man I *would* let under my roof.
Unlike you, he's worth hearing, so don't criticise.
He's -

DAMIS: *What?*

PERNELLE: - A good man! I'll not hear otherwise.

DAMIS: So I have to stomach this holy fucking fraud
Oozing his way through our house like a lord
Of the Manor. There's no pleasure we can have
Unless he approves. Fair suck of the sav!

DORINE: Yes, his sermons *have* begun to wear thin;
I mean, if you listen to him, *everything* is a sin.
And that pious little zealot doesn't miss a beat.

PERNELLE: To live a good life, you should sit at his feet
For he knows the highway to heaven's gate.
A man my son should force you to emulate.

DAMIS: Pardon me, Grandma, while I quietly throw up.
I mean, this guy really takes the cup.
And a father who'd want his kids to be like this
Would have to be one piddle short of a piss.
And like you, Grandma, I can also be blunt:

The day's fast approaching when I'll thump that runt.

DORINE: True, it *is* something altogether scandalous
A stranger in the house with no idea how to handle us;
He arrives with no shoes, his clothes not worth a cracker.
No sooner in the door, than he starts to wag his clacker.
You'd think he'd know his place, but instead he has the nerve
To act as though he's born to rule and we're just here to serve.

PERNELLE: Oh for heaven's sake, stop your silly chatter;
If the world were more like him, it'd be a damnsite better.

DORINE: In your dreams. The man's a hypocrite, and not a saint;
Trust me: it's a fantasy, this portrait you paint.

PERNELLE: Watch your tongue!

DORINE: Well where's the guarantee
That he or his valet are what they claim to be?

PERNELLE: I haven't a clue about his servant Laurent,
But as for Tartuffe, I know all I want
To know. He's a good man, righteous and true;
You only reject him because he sees through you;
Because he is right, he gets under your skin
With his heavenly wrath every time that you sin.

DORINE: Oh yes? Then can you tell me exactly why is it
That recently he doesn't like anyone else to visit
The house? What offence could possibly be given?
And can his deafening tantrum be well received in Heaven?
If you want to know, between us, why the hell is he
So possessive? It's your daughter-in-law. I think it's jealousy.

PERNELLE: You should shut your mouth and think before you speak!
He's not the only one who believes they have a cheek,
Your visitors! And all that trouble they create,
Blocking up the entrance, parking across the gate.
And all your raucous flunkeys, doing no one any favours,
Making such a racket, upsetting all the neighbours;
I'd like to think that's all it is, but I suspect some hanky-panky.
People talk, you know. No wonder Tartuffe is cranky.

CLEANTE: But, Madame, would you really want to stop all the chatter?
How boring life would be if we ever let it matter
What those fools say. Imagine if such a trend

Should cause you to renounce your every dearest friend?
Even if you could bring yourself to dump them just like that,
Do you think that this would mean an end to all the chat?
Libel knows no limits; and it offers no defence.
It's pointless up against big lies to plead your innocence.
If blackening your name is how these idiots get their kicks,
Just live the best you can - Too bad if some mud sticks.

DORINE: It's Daphné, that bitch next door, who started this fuss.
She and her short-arsed husband spreading lies about us.
Funny how it's those who are so easy to mock
That are first to find someone else's conduct a shock.
They sniff with razor-sharp detection
The tiniest whiff of intrigue or affection
And they spread the word with venomous glee,
Twisting the facts to what they want them to be;
They paint the deeds of others in a poisonous light
A strategy which makes their own wrongdoing seem right.
It's like a method of moral stain removal
To divert from themselves all public disapproval:
With a dollop of slander in the right ear deposited
They keep their own skeletons thoroughly closeted.

PERNELLE: All of your reasoning is just a diversion;
Our neighbour lives a moral life without the least perversion.
She's devoted to God; She's a model of a wife;
She just happens to disapprove of what goes on in *your* life.

DORINE: Some model! I must say that's one for the books.
She's only been moral since she lost her good looks.
It's true: the loss of her sexual dexterity
Was matched by a corresponding shift to severity.
She used to be able to pull in the men
And roger the lot of them up in her den
But: the moment her eyes began to lose their magic,
She started to see the whole world as, yes, tragic.
The fire in her breast had ceased to burn.
As the world dumped her, so she dumped it in return.
Such is the destiny of the ageing flirt
When they lose the capacity to seduce and divert.

I mean, what's left for them, in their sad solitude
But to take up, big time, the life of a prude?
It's like they're now touched by divine intercession;
Finding fault in everything becomes their chief obsession.
As self-appointed censors on what is wrong and right,
They start to shit on everyone from a very lofty height.
Why? Because all pleasures are now evil and assailable
Pleasures which, in menopause, are sadly not available.

PERNELLE: Well, Queen of the monologue: I hope you're content.
Crikey, you'd keep on talking under wet cement;
And even if it dried, it wouldn't shut your crack.
Pity help the poor blighter who tries to answer back.
I tell you, whatever you might think of my son,
Receiving Tartuffe is the best thing he's done.
So saintly, so devout, this man is heaven's way
Of answering the need of a house that's gone astray.
Hear what he says, if you value your salvation.
He only condemns things worthy of damnation:
Your visitors, your parties, your so-called recreation
Are all just different forms of the devil's incarnation.
Instead of a discussion on religious devotion
It's all pop songs, and claptrap, or some idle notion
That some poor person who is good and well-meaning
Should willy-nilly be held up to ridicule and demeaning.
In the end, even clear-thinking people have their doubts
By the time they've been brainwashed by your layabouts,
A hoard of cackling turkeys with nothing good to say -
They're like the Tower of Babel, as my doctor said one day;
Babble prattle cackle, like chickens in a barn.
That's what he said, my doctor. Yes. He spins a good yarn...

(Cléante can no longer contain his laughter.)

(re Cléante:) Well if it isn't Mister Giggly-Boots who seems to find this funny!
Go and find a looney-bin, and have a good laugh, sonny.
As for me... I'm off. I've said my bit. Goodbye.
God knows why he's laughing - it's enough to make you cry.

I hate it here. In fact, I think less of it each time.
Don't know why I come here. There's no reason or rhyme.

(She stirs Flipote)

Well come on, you useless slag. Stop gaping into space;
Jesus, Mary and Joseph - I ought to slap your face.

(She does.)

Let's go, you lazy slut.

Scene Two.

CLÉANTE and DORINE.

CLEANTE: Well I'm stopping here.
I'm certainly in no hurry to cop another ear-
Full from the old darling.

DORINE: Yes, that's for sure.
A pity she didn't stick around to hear your
Thoughts on the subject. She got in such a tizz!
She doesn't seem to realise just how out of touch she is.

CLEANTE: Why is it us that she dumps her wounded pride on?

DORINE: When it comes to Tartuffe, the old girl's got a wide-on.*
All her raving about Tartuffe is definitely perverse,
But wait till you see her son. Trust me, Orgon's worse.
Oh sure, he's done his service for country and king
He was brave and loyal and all that sort of thing
But: lately, I tell you, he's become a man possessed.
He's fallen for Tartuffe. It's obscene. He's quite obsessed.
He idolizes the guy, like they've been brothers forever;
And loves him more than his entire family put together.
He confides in him completely, things he'd never tell us;
He's like his spiritual mentor, which makes it really suss.
He embraces him like a Chosen One; sometimes he'll smother
Him with favours you wouldn't see a man give his lover.
He always sits Tartuffe in the best seat at the table
And loves to watch him pig out on as much as he is able

To wolf down. I tell you, talk about excess -
And even when he belches, he just smiles and says "God Bless".
In short, he's nuts about him, worships him like a hero.
He quotes him like an oracle or a holy scripture.

CLEANTE

Dear oh

Me.

DORINE:

And twenty four seven, he's always waxing lyrical
About how Tartuffe's smallest deed is somehow a bloody miracle.
Tartuffe's really taken him in; he plays him like a fiddle.
He really is a master of the art of how to diddle
A man. Regardless of the time, he'll hit him for some cash
He's now assumed the high-and-mighty right to have a bash
At us too. And that conceited ass, Laurent, who is his servant,
Has taken it on himself to give us orders like some fervent
Evangelistic fruitcake; with a fire and brimstone sermon,
He chucks out all our make-up, and claims he's very firm on
Our appearance. I use my handkerchief as a bookmark in my missal;
Well, the bugger tore it to shreds, telling me that this'll
Lead to darker sins; You've got to question the man's sanity
If a lady's hanky in a holy book amounts to a profanity.

*(Alt. Lines:

CLEANTE: Why is it us that she has to dump her shit on?

DORINE: When it comes to Tartuffe, the old girl's got a clit-on.)

Scene Three

ELMIRE, MARIANE, DAMIS, CLÉANTE, DORINE

ELMIRE: You made the right decision staying put; you should have heard
The diatribe she gave us at the gate; couldn't get a word
In. I saw my husband coming, though I'm not sure he saw me.
But if he wants to find me, he knows where I'll be -
I'll wait for him upstairs.

CLEANTE:

I really ought to go
But I suppose it won't hurt if I stay and say hello.