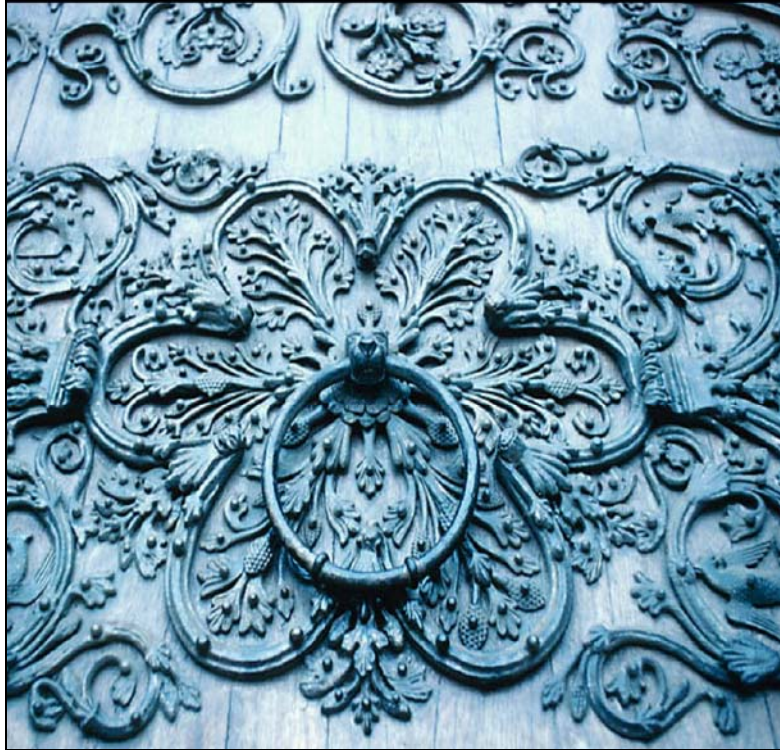


TARTUFFE

Adapted from the play by Molière



Lorraine Thompson

Norman Maine Publishing

TARTUFFE

2

Copyright © 2005, Lorraine Thompson

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

TARTUFFE is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all of the countries covered by the Universal Copyright Convention and countries with which the United States has bilateral copyright relations including Canada, Mexico, Australia, and all nations of the United Kingdom.

Copying or reproducing all or any part of this book in any manner is strictly forbidden by law. No part of this book may be stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, or videotaping without written permission from the publisher.

A royalty is due for every performance of this play whether admission is charged or not. A "performance" is any presentation in which an audience of any size is admitted.

The name of the author must appear on all programs, printing, and advertising for the play. The program must also contain the following notice: "Produced by special arrangement with Norman Maine Publishing Company, Sarasota, FL."

All rights including professional, amateur, radio broadcasting, television, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved by Norman Maine Publishing Company, www.NormanMainePlays.com, to whom all inquiries should be addressed.

Norman Maine Publishing
P.O. Box 1400
Tallevast, FL 34270

TARTUFFE

3

**“Evil does not exist
until it is published.”**

—Tartuffe

TARTUFFE

4

TARTUFFE was first performed November 2004 at Athens Academy in Athens, Georgia under the direction of Lorraine Thompson.

MME PERNELLE:	Molly Yarn
ORGON:	Alex Crawshaw
ELMIRE:	Hadley Cronk
DAMIS:	Nate Crawshaw
MARIANE:	Claire Coenen
VALÈRE:	Barritt Osborne
CLÉANTE:	Kendall Sherwood
TARTUFFE:	Aaron Strand
DORINE:	Mallory Moye
LOYAL:	Nandini Setia
SOLDIER 1:	Julia Curtis
SOLDIER 2:	Montana Perry
LAURENT:	Catherine Swanson
FLIPOTE:	Emily Westberry
ELMIRE (Understudy):	Julia Curtis

TARTUFFE

5

Tartuffe

SATIRE. The wealthy Orgon is a man of principle, but he is easily duped by Tartuffe, a sinister con man, who—under the guise of being a pious, righteous man—has set out to steal Orgon’s estate, seduce his wife, and marry his daughter. In *Tartuffe*, Molière satirizes with a razor-sharp wit religious hypocrisy and blind faith. This one-act adaptation contains all of the most memorable scenes from the original and features a strong ensemble cast.

Performance Time: Approximately 60 minutes.

About the Play

When *Tartuffe* debuted in 1664, religious leaders saw the play as an attack upon the church. As a result, public performances of the play were banned until 1669. Today, *Tartuffe* is considered one of Molière’s best-loved farces.

TARTUFFE

6

Characters

(7 m, 5 w, 2 flexible)

MADAME PERNELLE: Orgon's mother; overbearing.

ORGON: Wealthy gentleman; gullible.

ELMIRE: Orgon's wife; intelligent, modest.

DAMIS: Orgon's son; brash.

MARIANE: Orgon's daughter; timid.

VALÈRE: In love with Mariane.

CLÉANTE: Orgon's brother-in-law; sensible.

TARTUFFE: Conman who pretends to be a holy man.

DORINE: Mariane's maid; no-nonsense type.

LAURENT: Tartuffe's servant.

MONSIEUR LOYAL: Bailiff of the court.

SOLDIER 1, 2

FLIPOTE: Madame Pernelle's maid.

TARTUFFE

7

Setting

Paris, late 1600s. A sitting room at Orgon's residence. There is an assortment of furniture including a table, chairs, and a settee.

Props

Luggage
Cane
Handkerchief
Licorice drop
Legal papers
Woman's fan
Money

TARTUFFE

8

Scene 1

(AT RISE: A sitting room at Orgon's estate. Madame Pernelle enters, followed closely by Flipote, Elmire, Dorine, Damis, and Mariane.)

MME PERNELLE: I have had enough! Flipote!

FLIPOTE: Here, madame! I am right here!

MME PERNELLE: Come on, Flipote! *(To Elmire.)* Daughter-in-law, I am leaving! I can't stand the way things are going in my own son's house! My things, Flipote, my things! *(Flipote exits.)*

ELMIRE: Why must you go?

MME PERNELLE: I give you good advice. Who pays attention? Everyone speaks his mind, none shows respect. This place is Bedlam; everyone is king here.

DORINE: Madame—

MME PERNELLE: *(To Dorine.)* You! You, my dear, you are just a paid companion, a forward hussy, who talks too much.

DAMIS: Grandmamma—

MME PERNELLE: *(To Damis.)* You are a fool. I have told your father a hundred times you are disrespectful and your character is bad. All he will get from you is trouble!

MARIANE: I think—

MME PERNELLE: You think?! The fool's little sister thinks! Still waters are deep and dangerous. And something hides behind that mousey manner.

ELMIRE: Mother Pernelle—

MME PERNELLE: Dear Elmire, I will be frank. I find your attitude unfortunate. Your task should be to set a good example. Their own dead mother did so better than you. I disapprove of your extravagance. A wife, my dear, needs no such finery, if she would please her husband's eyes alone.

CLÉANTE: Madame, after all—

TARTUFFE

9

MME PERNELLE: As her brother, you have my esteem. But if I were my son, Orgon, I'd beg of you never to call again. The principles I hear you recommend are not the sort that decent folk observe. Flipote! (*Flipote appears loaded with Madame's belongings.*) I am speaking frankly. That is the way I am. When I feel a thing, I cannot hide it. Flipote!

FLIPOTE: Here, madame.

MME PERNELLE: Come, Flipote, we are leaving this house!

(They head toward exit.)

DAMIS: (*Sarcastic.*) We are idiots but nothing is wrong with Monsieur Tartuffe?!

MME PERNELLE: (*Overhears.*) Monsieur Tartuffe is a worthy man with principles! I am most annoyed to hear him criticized by fools like you!

DAMIS: He is a tyrant in our own home!

DORINE: If one believes him and his principles, everything we do becomes a crime.

MARIANE: He checks on everything.

MME PERNELLE: And what he checks on is most properly checked! He wants to lead you on the road to heaven! My son is well inspired to make you all love him.

DAMIS: Father can do his utmost, Grandmother, but nothing on earth can make me love the fellow.

DORINE: It seems to me perfectly scandalous that this outsider should take over things. He came to us a beggar with no shoes! But now that is all forgotten. Now he has found his place and he has the final say!

MARIANE: He is the boss!

MME PERNELLE: Mercy upon us! Things would be much better if all his pious rules were put in force.

DORINE: He is a saint in your imagination. In fact, he is nothing but a hypocrite! I wouldn't trust him out of my sight—his servant, Laurent, either.

TARTUFFE

10

MME PERNELLE: The servant I don't know, but for the master, I guarantee that he is a man of virtue. And you dislike him merely because he tells the truth. The one thing he really hates is sin and heaven's advantage is his only motive.

DORINE: Yes, but why is it that he won't allow any visitors? What is so shocking in a friendly call? I think he is jealous of madame.

ELMIRE: *(Not wanting to create more trouble.)* Dorine!

MME PERNELLE: Be careful what you say! *(Makes excuses for Tartuffe.)* Callers make quite a commotion. Carriages forever at the door, noisy lackeys hanging around. Neighbors will talk!

CLÉANTE: Wouldn't it be somewhat regrettable if we should lose our best friends to put a stop to conversation? Even supposing that we should bar the door forever, do you think people would then cease to talk? There is no wall so high it shuts out slander.

MME PERNELLE: Your fine words do not affect the case. My son did very wisely in welcoming that pious gentleman. Heaven sent him here to guide your spirits, and you should heed him for your soul's salvation. *(Flipote sits down with her heavy load.)* I have said enough. This household has come down in my opinion. *(She sees Flipote sitting.)* Flipote! Wake up, you rattle head!

(Flipote stands quickly.)

FLIPOTE: I am so sorry, madame!

MME PERNELLE: God's mercy, Flipote! On your way, trollop! My dear, Elmire, goodbye.

(All follow after Mme Pernelle and exit except for Dorine and Cléante.)

TARTUFFE

II

CLÉANTE: Didn't she get excited over nothing, and isn't she crazy about her Tartuffe.

DORINE: That son of hers is twice as bad. If you could see him, you'd really be shocked. He played a fine part in the wars, was faithful to the king through thick and thin, but now he acts as if he'd lost his wits, since he has been bewitched by his Tartuffe. He calls him brother! Confides his secrets to Tartuffe alone and makes him sole director of his actions, gives him the place of honor at his table, and beams to see him eat enough for six. He is mad about the man! And Tartuffe knows a good thing when he sees it, puts on an act, the better to fool his dupe! His holy manner pays off in cash while he makes bold to criticize us all. Even that boy who serves him takes upon himself to give us lessons!

(Enter Elmire, Mariane, and Damis.)

ELMIRE: Lucky you didn't come and hear the speech she made us standing in the doorway. I saw my husband...
(Dorine exits to greet Orgon.) ...but he did not see me. I think I'll wait for him in the upstairs parlor.

CLÉANTE: Not to waste time, I'll wait to see him here. I merely want to greet him and be gone.

(Elmire and Mariane exit.)

DAMIS: *(To Cléante.)* Bring up the question of my sister's marriage. I have an idea that Tartuffe is against it. He is swaying Father, creating difficulties. Valère and my sister are in love and...I am more than fond of Valère's sister. And if I had to...

(Dorine re-enters with Orgon's coat, hat, and cane.)

DORINE: He's coming!

TARTUFFE

12

(Damis exits.)

TARTUFFE

13

Scene 2

(AT RISE: Moments later. Orgon enters.)

ORGON: (To Cléante.) Good morning, brother-in-law.

CLÉANTE: I was just leaving. I'm glad to see you back.

ORGON: (Calls.) Dorine! (To Cléante.) Just wait a minute, please, Cléante, until I have a chance to inform myself about the household news during my absence. (Dorine enters. To Dorine.) Everything's been all right the past few days?

DORINE: Two days ago, your mistress had a fever and a bad headache.

ORGON: And Tartuffe?

DORINE: Tartuffe? Oh, he is doing fine.

ORGON: Poor fellow.

DORINE: Your mistress couldn't touch a single thing at supper.

ORGON: And Tartuffe?

DORINE: Ate his supper in her presence. He devoured two partridges and a leg of mutton.

ORGON: Poor fellow.

DORINE: During the following night she did not shut her eyes a single moment.

ORGON: And Tartuffe?

DORINE: Tartuffe was sleepy enough. He went to bed right after dinner and slept until the following day.

ORGON: Poor fellow.

DORINE: (Sarcastic.) Now both are doing well. I'll tell madame the sympathetic interest you've taken in the news of her recovery. (She exits.)

CLÉANTE: She is laughing in your face, Orgon. I'm frank to say she has good reason. This fellow must cast some uncanny spell that paralyzes all your common sense.

ORGON: Cléante, you do not know the man you are talking of.

TARTUFFE

14

CLÉANTE: I do not know him personally, it's true, but I know well what kind of a man he is.

ORGON: Brother-in-law, you would be charmed to know him. You would be simply overwhelmed with pleasure. Following his teachings, you gain peace of mind. My talks with him have changed me utterly. He's taught me to despise worldly attachments. If you'd been present when we made acquaintance, you'd have become his friend, the same as I. He used to come to our church every day and kneel near me. Everyone would notice him. He sighed so deeply. Every now and then, he would kiss the floor. When I was going out, he would run ahead to offer me holy water at the door. His servant told me about his life, his poverty. I made him presents. "This is too much!" he'd tell me. "I don't deserve to have you pity me!" When I would refuse to take them back, he'd give them to the poor! T'was heaven that made me bring him to my house, and since that time, everything prospers here. He censures everything, for my honor, and he takes an active interest in my wife. He warns me when people look too kindly at her. He is twice as jealous of her as I could be. You cannot imagine his religious scruples!

CLÉANTE: Orgon, I think you are crazy. I am not befooled by such performances. There is false devotion like false bravery. The really brave are not the noisiest ones. The truly pious, whom we should imitate, are not the ones who show off their devotion. Distinction should be made between hypocrisy and piety. It seems you honor the mask as much as the true face. You confuse the outward semblance with the truth.

ORGON: (*Sarcastic.*) Cléante, I can see that all of man's wisdom has been lodged in you.

CLÉANTE: No, Orgon, the world's wisdom is not lodged in me. But there is one thing that I do well know: To tell the difference between true and false. I know you praise him in good faith, but I think you are taken in by false appearance.

TARTUFFE

15

ORGON: Cléante, if you have finished... (*Bows.*) ...I am your humble servant.

CLÉANTE: Just a moment. Before you leave, let us address one other thing. You have consented that young Valère should have your daughter's hand.

ORGON: Yes.

CLÉANTE: And what's more, you have even set the day.

ORGON: Yes.

CLÉANTE: Why is it postponed?

ORGON: (*Hedging the truth.*) I don't know why.

CLÉANTE: You have another idea? Is there some obstacle to keep you from fulfilling your engagement?

ORGON: Perhaps.

CLÉANTE: You hint that you would go back on your word.

ORGON: Maybe.

CLÉANTE: Why must you beat around the bush? What are your plans?

ORGON: To follow the will of heaven. (*He exits.*)

CLÉANTE: I fear that courtship is in for trouble. I must tell Valère.

(*He exits.*)

Scene 3

(AT RISE: *Sitting room, moments later. Orgon enters.*)

ORGON: (*Calls.*) Mariane!

(*Mariane enters.*)

MARIANE: Father?

ORGON: Come here. I want to speak to you... (*He looks behind UC curtains.*) ...in confidence.

MARIANE: What are you looking for?

ORGON: Eavesdroppers, my dear. Now, Mariane, you have always had a gentle character. And I have always been most fond of you.

MARIANE: I have been very grateful for your love, Papa.

ORGON: And to deserve my affection you should be ready to accept my judgments.

MARIANE: I always have, Papa.

ORGON: Splendid! Now tell me, what do you think of Tartuffe?

MARIANE: (*Surprised.*) What do I think?

ORGON: Yes, what do you think?

MARIANE: (*Unsure.*) I think...I think whatever you think I should think.

(*Dorine enters, unnoticed.*)

ORGON: Well said. You think he is a man of most unusual merit. He moves your heart, and you would be overjoyed to have me pick him to be your husband.

MARIANE: What?

ORGON: What?

MARIANE: What did you say? Who is it you say who moves my heart and would make me overjoyed to be my husband?

TARTUFFE

17

ORGON: Tartuffe.

MARIANE: Oh, no, no, no! It is impossible. I—

ORGON: I have decided on it. That's enough.

MARIANE: Father, you really mean—?

ORGON: To make Tartuffe a member of our family. He will be your husband, I am resolved on that. *(Dorine gasps. Orgon spots Dorine. To Dorine.)* What are you doing here?

DORINE: I had heard the story that this peculiar marriage was afoot, but... *(She thinks Orgon is joking. To Mariane.)* Do not believe a word your father says. He's joking... *(She looks at Orgon. He is not amused.)* Nobody can believe it. *(Pause.)* All right, I believe it. *(To Orgon.)* But how can a sensible-looking man like you be so simple-minded?! That man has no business with your daughter. What good does such a marriage do for you? Why would a man like yourself, with your property, choose a beggar for a son-in-law?

ORGON: That is why we should revere him! His poverty is a *worthy* poverty, which sets him above rank and wealth. My financial aid will help him rise out of his troubles, regain his property. He is a landed squire, a gentleman.

DORINE: So he says. His vanity about it is unbecoming to his piety. Devotion does not fit with smugness and ambition. Doesn't it trouble you that a man like him should be possessor of a girl like her? *(They each look at the vacant Mariane.)* Think of how dangerous your project is.

ORGON: Daughter, we will waste no time with all this nonsense. I know what is best for you. It is true that I pledged you to Valère. But now, I fear that he is somewhat of a free-thinker.

DORINE: I don't think—

ORGON: I did not ask your views on the matter. *(To Mariane.)* This marriage will be rich in every blessing. You will be just like a pair of turtledoves.

DORINE: I don't think—

ORGON: Hold your tongue and don't meddle in what is none of your business.

TARTUFFE

18

DORINE: I am only speaking, sir, for your own good.

ORGON: That is all too kind of you. Now be silent.

DORINE: If I didn't love you —

ORGON: I don't want to be loved.

DORINE: Cherishing your honor, I can't bear the mockeries
you would lay yourself open to.

ORGON: Will you shut up?!

DORINE: Even when silent...I can think.

ORGON: Think if you like...just don't utter a word. *(Dorine locks her lips. To Mariane.)* As a sensible man... *(Dorine draws a breath. Orgon shoots Dorine a look.)* ...Tartuffe has his qualities. *(Dorine draws a breath to speak. He looks at her again.)* He has looks —

DORINE: Bad though they may be.

ORGON: So you won't obey my orders?

DORINE: I was not talking to you. I was talking to myself.

(Orgon directs Dorine to exit. She pretends to leave.)

ORGON: *(To Mariane.)* In short, Mariane, you owe obedience,
and you must show respect for my opinion.

(Dorine sticks her head back in the room.)

DORINE: You would never make me agree to such a
husband.

(Orgon chases Dorine out of the room and returns to Mariane.)

ORGON: *(To Mariane.)* That forward girl of yours, Mariane,
has provoked me to the sin of anger. I am in no state to
carry on our talk. I must take a walk to calm myself.

(He exits.)

Scene 4

(AT RISE: Moments later. Dorine enters and approaches Marianne.)

DORINE: Do I have to play your part for you? Have you lost your power of speech? You will let him make this absurd proposal and not combat it with a single word?

MARIANE: What can I do?

DORINE: Tell him a heart cannot love by proxy! The marriage is for your sake, not his. Since he finds Tartuffe so fascinating, he is the one who ought to marry him!

MARIANE: I know, but Father is so masterful. I have never had the courage to oppose him.

DORINE: Look, Valère has made his formal suit. Now let me ask you...do you love him, or don't you?

MARIANE: Dorine! You know I love him! You have no reason to ask that question! Haven't I poured it out a hundred times? Don't you know the greatness of my love? You do me great wrong. I thought my feelings were sufficiently clear!

DORINE: In short, you love him?

MARIANE: Yes!

DORINE: And he loves you?

MARIANE: I think so.

DORINE: And you are both equally eager to be married?

MARIANE: Certainly!

DORINE: So what is your plan about this other proposal?

MARIANE: My plan? *(Pause.)* To kill myself!

DORINE: *(Sarcastic.)* Splendid! To escape from trouble, you only have to die!

MARIANE: You don't sympathize much with others' sorrows.

DORINE: I don't much sympathize with those who drivel and then go weak when the test comes.

TARTUFFE
20

MARIANE: What can I do? I am naturally timid.

DORINE: Love demands a courageous heart!

MARIANE: If I refuse Tartuffe with open scorn, won't I reveal how deeply I am in love? Brilliant though Valère is...shall...shall I abandon for him my modesty, my daughterly duty?

DORINE: (*Sarcastic.*) No. I see you wish to be Madame Tartuffe. And now that I think about it, I am wrong in weaning you from this alliance. One would be lucky indeed to be his wife. You will be all too happy with such a husband.

MARIANE: Stop! Give me counsel how to escape the marriage. I'll do anything.

DORINE: No, a good daughter should obey her father—though he should choose a monkey for her mate.

MARIANE: Stop it and help me with some good advice!

DORINE: To punish you, the marriage must go through. (*She moves to exit SR.*)

MARIANE: Dorine!

(*Dorine stops and returns to Mariane.*)

DORINE: I will put aside my anger. If we are clever enough, we can prevent this marriage. (*Mariane throws her arms around Dorine.*)

Scene 5

(AT RISE: Mariane and Dorine see Valère enter SL.)

DORINE: (To Mariane.) Here is your lover, your Valère.

VALÈRE: Mademoiselle... (He bows and kisses Mariane's hand. She blushes. He is in a good mood. He does not believe what he has heard. He thinks it is a wild rumor.) There is a story going round that is news to me. You are to marry Tartuffe!

(He laughs. He sees that Dorine and Mariane are not laughing. He stops laughing.)

MARIANE: It is my father's idea.

VALÈRE: Your father?

MARIANE: He has come out in favor of that marriage.

VALÈRE: And what is your opinion on the matter, mademoiselle?

MARIANE: (Confused.) I don't know.

VALÈRE: (Shocked and hurt.) You don't know?

MARIANE: No.

VALÈRE: No?

MARIANE: (Coy.) What is your advice?

VALÈRE: My advice is to accept this husband.

MARIANE: Really?

VALÈRE: Certainly.

MARIANE: Well, I am glad to have your counsel.

VALÈRE: I think you'll follow it without much trouble.

MARIANE: With no more trouble than you had in giving it.

DORINE: We'll soon find out how this is going to end.

VALÈRE: So this is how you love me?

MARIANE: You told me outright that I ought to accept, and that is what I intend to do.

TARTUFFE

22

VALÈRE: Don't excuse yourself by quoting me! You had already formed your resolution. Your heart has never felt any real love for me.

MARIANE: Valère! You may think so if you wish!

VALÈRE: Maybe I have other plans. Maybe there is another girl who may be kinder. She will gladly console me.

MARIANE: The loss is not so great.

VALÈRE: I have borne insults enough! This is the last time that you will see me. *(Starts to exit.)*

MARIANE: Excellent!

VALÈRE: Uh... *(Halts, turns.)*

MARIANE: What?

VALÈRE: Did I hear you call me?

DORINE: *(To Valère and Mariane.)* I have let you squabble to heart's content to find out where you would land at last. Both of you come here.

(Mariane and Valère approach Dorine.)

MARIANE: *(To Dorine.)* My presence seems to irritate him.

VALÈRE: *(To Dorine.)* Clearly it tortures her to look at me.

DORINE: You are crazy, both of you. *(To Valère.)* The only thing she wants to be is yours. *(To Mariane.)* He loves you only and his one desire is marriage with you.

MARIANE: Oh, Valère!

VALÈRE: Oh, Mariane!

(They embrace.)

DORINE: Now let us think of stopping the other marriage.

MARIANE: Have you any ideas?

DORINE: There are many things we can do. The best thing for you to do is yield. *(Valère and Mariane are shocked at the suggestion.)* You can cure many things by gaining time. You can postpone the wedding. First, you will take as your excuse some illness, which will strike suddenly and cause

TARTUFFE

23

delays. Then you will meet an omen of misfortune. Perhaps you will pass a funeral or break a mirror. The great thing is that nobody can bind you to anyone without you saying yes. But out of prudence, it would be advisable that you two should not be caught talking together. *(To Valère.)* Now go and use the influence of your friends to help you get the girl who was promised you. We shall make her brother work for us and her stepmother. *(She pushes him toward the exit.)*
Goodbye.

MARIANE: *(Calls to him.)* I shall never be anyone's bride but yours.

VALÈRE: You make me very happy.

DORINE: Lovers! *(To Valère.)* You go out this way... *(Points SL. To Mariane.)* ...and you go out the other. *(Points SR.)*

(Mariane exits SR. Valère moves to follow her. Dorine points him to exit SL. He exits SL.)

TARTUFFE

24

Scene 6

(AT RISE: Tartuffe enters from SR followed by Laurent, Orgon, and Elmire. As the group moves across the stage, Dorine pulls Elmire away from the others and whispers into her ear. Elmire nods and crosses quickly to SL to catch up with the others as they exit. Dorine crosses toward SR exit as Damis enters SL.)

DAMIS: Let a bolt of lightning strike me dead, call me a scoundrel, anything you please...but I must stop that swine's plan to marry my sister!

DORINE: Take it easy. Let your stepmother handle the fellow. She has some influence on Tartuffe. I feel he has a kind of weakness for her...at least I hope so! He will be coming back in a moment or two, so out you go.

(She tries to push him toward the SR exit. He resists. Damis moves SL.)

DAMIS: Maybe I should be present during their meeting.

DORINE: No! *(Pulls him SR.)* They must be alone!

(Damis escapes to move SL.)

DAMIS: I will keep quiet.

DORINE: Ha! I know you. You will just get angry. *(They hear Tartuffe and Laurent offstage SL.)* He is coming! Get out!

(Damis runs to hide behind the UC curtains.)

DAMIS: I want to see.

DORINE: What a nuisance you are!

(Tartuffe enters SL with Laurent.)

TARTUFFE

25

TARTUFFE: Put my hair shirt away, Laurent, and pray for heaven's continual grace. If anyone wants me, say I am off to the prison to give away the charity given me.

LAURENT: (*Bows.*) Yes, my lord. You are such a good man...
(*To Dorine.*) ...a fine example for us all.

(*Laurent exits SR. Tartuffe turns to discover Dorine.*)

TARTUFFE: Oh, dear heavens! Please take this handkerchief and cover that which I must not see. (*He crosses to sit on the settee.*) Such sights are hurtful to the spirit and may awaken guilty thoughts.

DORINE: You must be very sensitive to temptation. Flesh makes a great impression on your senses!

TARTUFFE: Please be more modest in your speech or... (*He stands.*) ...I must leave the room immediately.

DORINE: No, it is I who will go and leave you in peace. (*She crosses to exit SR.*) Oh, Madame Elmire is coming to the parlor and would like to have a word with you alone.

TARTUFFE: Is she coming soon?

DORINE: I think I hear her now. I will leave you two together. (*Aside.*) I think I was right about him!

(*Dorine exits SR.*)

Scene 7

(AT RISE: Elmire enters SL. Tartuffe rises to greet her. Elmire is very aware of the "danger" she may be in.)

TARTUFFE: *(Bows.)* May heaven forever grant you health of soul and body. Let us sit down to be more comfortable.

(He guides her to sit on the settee next to him. Elmire crosses SR instead.)

ELMIRE: I am glad we have this chance to be unobserved...
(Damis sticks his head out from the curtains.) ...I wanted to speak privately to you.

(Tartuffe crosses to her.)

TARTUFFE: I am glad too...to find myself alone with you. It is an opportunity I have prayed for.

(She crosses to sit on the settee.)

ELMIRE: I too have wished a chance for intimate talk when you might speak from the heart...without disguise.

(Tartuffe crosses to kneel at her feet.)

TARTUFFE: What I have wished is to lay my soul utterly bare before you. Indeed, madame, such is my devotion.

(He places his hand on her knee.)

ELMIRE: Your hand...what pray, is it doing there?

(Tartuffe moves to sit beside her.)

TARTUFFE

27

TARTUFFE: Just feeling the fabric...so soft. And the needlework is truly astonishing.

(Elmire moves farther away from him on the settee.)

ELMIRE: Quite so. But let us talk about our business. I hear my husband wants to break his word and marry you to his daughter. Is that true?

TARTUFFE: He has hinted at it. But to tell the truth... *(He moves closer to her.)* ...that is not the happiness I languish for.

(Elmire moves away from him.)

ELMIRE: Oh, yes, you do not love earthly things.

TARTUFFE: The heart in my bosom is not made of stone. The love that draws us to eternal beauty does not exclude the love of... *(He moves closer.)* ...worldly things. For, I could not look upon you without admiring nature's author and without feeling an enthusiastic love. I know it is a great audacity for me to dare offer you this heart... *(He takes her hand and places it on his chest.)* ...but my affection seeks all from your bounty.

(Elmire pulls her hand away and stands.)

ELMIRE: This is a gallant declaration indeed, but I must say I find it rather surprising. I mean a pious man like you—so widely knows—

(Tartuffe stands.)

TARTUFFE: I know such words from me may seem surprising, but after all, madame, I am not an angel.

(Elmire crosses behind the settee.)

TARTUFFE

28

ELMIRE: Monsieur Tartuffe!

TARTUFFE: I vow to you, O lovely miracle, immeasurable worship and devotion. *(He moves upstage of settee to her.)* And in my hands your honor runs no risk or scandal. Men, such as myself, are discreet. With me, one is always sure of secrecy. The care I take with my own reputation is a guarantee to the person I adore.

(Elmire moves to stand SR of table.)

ELMIRE: Are you not afraid I may tell my husband about your gallant longings and that this information may disturb the warm affection that he holds for you?

TARTUFFE: I know that you are far too merciful and that you will pardon my boldness.

(He bows his head. Elmire crosses DS of him to the settee.)

ELMIRE: I will not repeat the matter to my husband, but in return, I want one thing of you...

(Tartuffe raises his head. Damis leaps from hiding and crosses DS.)

DAMIS: No, madame! This news must be reported! This scoundrel talked to you of love! My father should be told the truth!

(Elmire moves to Damis.)

ELMIRE: Damis! It is enough if he mends his ways deserving the pardon, which I would have offered him. *(She pulls him SL.)* A woman laughs at such absurdities and does not trouble her husband's ears about them.

DAMIS: He has caused trouble in our home, ruled father, and blocked our courtships for long enough! There is no use in trying to force me to surrender the pleasure of holding

TARTUFFE

29

vengeance in my hand! I am going to settle things immediately... (*Orgon enters SL.*) ...and here is my opportunity!

[End of Freeview]