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IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE?

Is There a Doctor in the House?

A modern adaptation of the farcical
"doctor plays" of Moliere

by Tim Kelly



Meriwether Publishing Ltd.

Contemporary Drama Service

PO Box 7710 • Colorado Springs, CO 80933-7710

PRODUCTION NOTES

ABOUT STAGING FARCE

The rules haven't changed from Moliere's time. Everything should be somewhat overdone, almost cartoonish. There must never be a "slow" or "dead" spot. Something is always happening. The dialogue moves briskly — and loudly. Characters do not enter and exit: they make an entrance; they make an exit.

PROPS

ON STAGE: Table with (2) chairs, registration desk (or table) with ledger and pen. Optional stairs, store counter with merchandise: blankets, magazines, funnel, bolts of cloth, canned goods, clothing, etc. Shelves with more stock, including shelf marked "Cures and Such" with small medicine bottles, boxes of pills. Stools (2), headless clothing dummy, backless bench. Additional stage dressing, as desired. e.g. — rug(s), cracker or pickle barrel, hanging lamp, pictures, etc.

PERSONAL & BROUGHT ON, Act I:

TOM — cards

WIDOW — napkins, hanky, spoon, glass of water, bucket, store goods, funnel, large white medical smock

MAYOR — eyeglasses

PREACHER — book

OTIS — (2) canes, long white beard, optional ear trumpet

LESTER — flowers

BLOSSOM — magazine

DR. PILLPURGE — white medical smock, pocket watch, carpet-bag or suitcase with machete or saw, lantern, business card.

Huge cardboard cutout of hypodermic syringe, battered hat

MRS. CORNSTARCH & MRS. CORNSILK — shopping baskets

ALBERTA, CASSANDRA, TALLULAH — hatboxes

MISS STRICT — handbag with optional hand bell

PERSONAL & BROUGHT ON, Act II:

DR. ABRACADRABA — white medical smock, small table with medicine bottles

PRINCESS — drum, sign reading "Dr. Abracadraba's Medicine Show," plastic bottle with label

WIDOW — feather duster, bedsheet, wedding veil, flowers
MARJORIE — waitress apron, cap, tray
ALBERTA — toothache bandana, giant tooth
GYPSY HAGG — junk jewelry, fringed shawl, earrings, kerchief, dress for Lucy
SNAG — medical smock
MAYOR — dollar
LUCY — suitcase
DR. PILLPURGE — medical suitcase with giant pliers, fake hand/foot, heart/liver, sausage links (socks)
HEPZIBAH — lighted wax candle
SHERIFF — marriage license

MICELLANEOUS

PILLS INTO FUNNEL: The narrow end of the funnel is blocked. This way, if enough pills are poured in they will “overflow” and get a laugh. If you don’t wish to do this business, simply pretend pills are being poured into the funnel.

HUGE HYPODERMIC SYRINGE: It’s one-dimensional, made from cardboard or wood and painted to look like the real thing (ditto for the dental pliers). Dr. Pillpurge needs two hands to carry it.

CUTOUT MEDICINE BOTTLES: For Medicine Show. If they are cutouts you eliminate the problem of dropping them (bottles). Or, the few bottles can be small, which will also reduce the risk of dropping them.

OPERATION BEHIND THE SCREEN: This slapstick routine was enormously popular in Moliere’s time (17th Century). Supposedly, we are watching an incredible operation where everything is taken out and then “put back in.” The hands and foot can be cutouts, ditto for a heart. It always gets a big laugh so don’t be afraid to “add on” — an arm, a leg, a wig, a big eye, etc. For a more “elaborate” touch: Dim the stage lights and have the “light” be a lantern or high-powered flashlight. It’s placed some distance behind the sheet. Thus, we see the mad operation in silhouette.

BEATING UP SNAG: Play it for laughs — like a TV wrestling match. Snag might run off the stage and into audience with Lester and Sheriff in pursuit.

SPEECHLESS LUCY: The actress portraying Lucy is frequently on stage as the focus of attention, but speechless. Actress “must stay in scene,” observing and reacting. This goes for any actor who is in a scene, but without dialogue. They, too, must stay in the scene.

ABOUT THE JOKES: The script is filled with gags, puns, groaners, absurdities. Some jokes will bring a howl; others will fall flat. This will vary from performance to performance. The point is this — treat the jokes, the good, the bad, the indifferent, like normal dialogue. In other words — don't "set up a joke and wait for the laugh." Once the joke is out, move on to the next one.

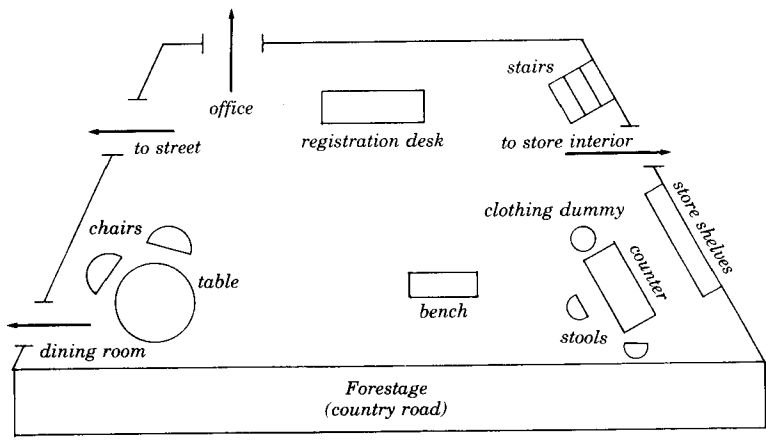
COSTUMES: Whatever would work for a "mellerdrammer" works here. Long skirts or dresses for the females, jeans and western shirts for most of the males. Special attention should be given to the Gypsy costume and Princess needs an Indian costume with, maybe, a feathered headdress.

SETTING: The main action of the play takes place in the "Grease Gulch Boarding House Hotel and General Store" — when the West was wild.

ACT I: A crazy morning in summer.
 ACT II: A crazy afternoon.

FLOOR PLAN

(The Boarding House Hotel and Grease Gulch General Store)



GREASE GULCH CHARACTERS
(In Order of Speaking)

TOM SAWYER HUCKLEBERRY

FINN JONES, JR. — Young citizen.

WIDOW STOCKADE — Runs the general store. Her husband was pecked to death by a hen.

HEPZIBAH — Mayor's wife.

MAYOR CAESAR CANARY — Owns the hotel. Something of a tyrant.

BLOSSOM — Lucy's friend, pretty.

LUCY CANARY — Mayor's independent teenage daughter. In love with Lester.

SHERIFF — Lester's uncle.

LESTER GOODBE — Cowpoke, in love with Lucy.

PREACHER — Likes weddings, funerals, too.

OTIS LACKGINGER — Needs a doctor.

DR. PILLPURGE — Town quack.

MRS. CORNSILK — Citizen.

MRS. CORNSTARCH — Citizen.

MARJORIE — Snag's young wife.

SNAG — Lazy cowboy who becomes "a famous doctor."

MISS STRICT — School marm.

ALBERTA — Pupil with toothache.

CASSANDRA — Pupil with tummy ache.

TALLULAH — Pupil with headache.

DR. ABRACADRABA — Medicine show quack.

PRINCESS FALLING STAR — His assistant.

GYPSY HAGG — Not to be trusted.

AMANDA FLIMFLAM — Lawyer from Denver.

OPTIONAL EXTRAS — Pupils, citizens.

ACT I

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SETTING: Lobby of "Grease Gulch Boarding House Hotel and General Store." Down Right is the entrance into the dining room. In front of this entrance, Upstage a little, is a table with two chairs. Stage Right is the entrance from the street. Up Right Center is the doorway to the hotel office. Up Center is the registration desk [or table]. Registration ledger, pen, etc. Up Left are stairs that lead to the second story of the hotel [a few steps will suffice, or the "stairs" can be eliminated altogether]. Stage Left is the entrance into the interior of the General Store. However, much of the merchandise is on display in the lobby. There's a counter [or long table] Left Center. On the counter are bolts of cloths, canned goods, lamps, pots and pans, ladies' hats, etc. Down Left, behind the counter, are shelves with more merchandise, including a section marked "Cures and Such." In front of the counter there's a stool. Another stool is positioned at the Downstage end of the counter. At the Upstage end of the counter is a headless clothing "dummy." Down Left Center is a backless bench. Additional stage dressing: rugs, barrel, hanging lamp, pictures, etc., as desired. The Forestage represents a country road.

AT RISE: TOM, about 15 or 16, is seated at the table playing a hand of solitaire. WIDOW STOCKADE is busy at the counter, folding napkins. As she works, she hums.

TOM: Drat!

WIDOW STOCKADE: What's wrong, Tom?

TOM: Another six. Just when I don't want it.

WIDOW STOCKADE: It's only a game.

TOM: I shouldn't play cards with myself. I can't win. Even when I cheat.

WIDOW STOCKADE: (*Holds up napkins.*) Aren't these divine?

TOM: What are they?

WIDOW STOCKADE: What a question. They're dinner napkins. Imported.

1 **TOM:** Imported from where?
2 **WIDOW STOCKADE:** Possum Creek.
3 **TOM:** What's a man supposed to do with a dinner napkin?
4 **WIDOW STOCKADE:** When you're finished with dinner you
5 wipe your mouth on it.
6 **TOM:** *(Holding up his wrist, indicating)* What's the matter with
7 the back of my shirt-sleeve?
8 **WIDOW STOCKADE:** How like Grease Gulch. No refinement.
9 *(HEPZIBAH, wife of the hotel's owner, hurries down the stairs.*
10 *She's in a "state.")*
11 **HEPZIBAH:** Oh! Oh! Oh!
12 **TOM:** How do, Miz Canary.
13 **WIDOW STOCKADE:** 'Morning, Hepzibah. *(HEPZIBAH is too*
14 *nervous to reply, hurries into office.)*
15 **HEPZIBAH:** Oh! Oh! Oh! *(She exits.)*
16 **TOM:** Wonder what's the matter with her?
17 **WIDOW STOCKADE:** It probably has something to do with
18 her daughter.
19 **TOM:** Lucy?
20 **WIDOW STOCKADE:** She doesn't want to marry. It's the talk
21 of the town.
22 **TOM:** You mean she wants to be an old maid?
23 **WIDOW STOCKADE:** I mean she doesn't want to marry her
24 father's choice. Whole town knows she's in love with
25 Lester Goodbe.
26 **TOM:** Lester Goodbe. *(Out to audience)* My very best friend.
27 **WIDOW STOCKADE:** Only Lester is poorer than a church
28 mouse.
29 **TOM:** *(To his friend's defense)* Lester's got a good heart.
30 **WIDOW STOCKADE:** Try ringing that up on a cash register.
31 Mayor Canary is dead set against a penniless husband
32 for Lucy. *(From inside the office comes the voice of MAYOR*
33 *CANARY.)*
34 **MAYOR'S VOICE:** What!?
35 **HEPZIBAH'S VOICE:** Calm yourself, Caesar.

1 **MAYOR'S VOICE:** She'll marry him! She'll marry today!
2 Fetch her down here!

3 **HEPZIBAH'S VOICE:** But, Caesar, dear —

4 **MAYOR'S VOICE:** Don't you "Ceasar, dear" me. Move! (*In a*
5 *second, HEPZIBAH comes from the office, on the run. She is*
6 *plainly terrified of her bullying husband.*)

7 **HEPZIBAH:** Oh! Oh! Oh!

8 **TOM:** How do, Miz Canary.

9 **WIDOW STOCKADE:** 'Morning, Hepzibah.

10 **HEPZIBAH:** (*Up the stairs and out*) Oh! Oh! Oh! (*MAYOR*
11 *CANARY steps from his office. He's a big man, overbearing.*
12 *Wears spectacles. Yells after HEPZIBAH*)

13 **MAYOR:** It's a daughter's duty to respect her father's wishes!
14 If you brought her up proper, I wouldn't have this
15 problem! Hepzibah, you've spoiled that girl! It's all your
16 fault! (*Notices TOM & WIDOW STOCKADE staring at him,*
17 *frozen in fascination.*) What are you two staring at! (*His*
18 *powerful voice shatters their concentration. TOM immediately*
19 *begins to play with the cards and WIDOW STOCKADE resumes*
20 *folding napkins. MAYOR enters his office as BLOSSOM, a*
21 *teenage girl, comes down the stairs, moves behind bench.*)

22 **BLOSSOM:** What a day, what a day. Poor Lucy is beside
23 herself.

24 **TOM:** Never can figure out why you gals make such a fuss
25 about getting hitched. I reckon Otis ain't so bad.

26 **BLOSSOM:** He ain't so good, either.

27 **TOM:** He's rich.

28 **BLOSSOM:** Rich! That's all you men think about. You sound
29 like Mayor Canary.

30 **WIDOW STOCKADE:** Not too loud, Blossom. (*Points to office.*)
31 He might overhear.

32 **BLOSSOM:** Let him. It's plumb cruel of Mayor Canary to
33 force his only daughter to marry a man she doesn't love.
34 (*In sympathy, WIDOW STOCKADE dabs at the corner of one*
35 *eye with a hanky.*)

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