



The Miser

Molière (1622 -1673)

Read by:	Cast	Catalog:	DB-1259
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Genre:	Plays, Comedies		

Harpagon, the title character of *The Miser*, is consumed by all aspects of his wealth. He makes money by lending at usurious rates and pinching pennies at all turns. A widower in his sixties, he seeks to marry Mariane, an attractive young woman who is already involved with his son Cléante. His daughter, Élise, is the beloved of Valere, a steward in his household. He insists she marry a wealthy older man. The plot moves quickly, coming to a head when a servant, La Flèche, steals his money box. The play deftly blends satire and farce, and also makes fun of theatrical functions, such as spoken asides that the characters actually hear and including the audience among the possible suspects in the robbery. The seemingly intractable complications are eventually resolved by the discovery that some of the problematic characters

are actually long-lost relatives. *The Miser* is loosely based on and borrows plot points and dialog from the Latin comedy *Aulularia* by *Plautus* and from Italian farces. Versions began appearing throughout Europe soon after its debut in 1668. The play has been translated and adapted continuously ever since.

Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, better known by his stage name **Molière** (January 15, 1622 – February 17, 1673), was a French playwright and actor widely regarded as one of the world's greatest writers. His works include comedies, farces, and tragicomedies and are performed at the Comédie-Française more often than those of any other playwright. Born into a prosperous family and educated at the Collège de Clermont, Molière spent thirteen years as an itinerant actor while he began writing. Through the patronage of aristocrats he procured a command performance before the King. Performing a classic Corneille play and a farce of his own, Molière was granted the use of salle du Petit-Bourbon and later the theatre in the Palais-Royal, where he met success with plays such as *The Affected Ladies*, *The School for Husbands* and *The School for Wives*. Royal favor brought a pension and the title Troupe du Roi to his troupe and appointment as official author of court entertainments. Though popular with the court and Parisians, Molière's satires attracted criticism. *Tartuffe's* attack on religious hypocrisy was roundly condemned by the Church, while *Don Juan* was banned from performance. His hard work took its toll on his health. In 1667 he was forced to take a break from the stage. In 1673, during a production of his final play, *The Imaginary Invalid*, Molière, suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis, was seized by a coughing fit and a hemorrhage while playing the hypochondriac Argan. He finished the performance but collapsed and died a few hours later.