



The School for Wives

Molière (1622 -1673)

Read by:	Cast	Catalog:	DB-1260
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Genre:	Plays, Comedies		

Arnolphe, the protagonist of *The School for Wives*, is so intimidated by women that he resolves to raise his young ward, Agnès, as his future wife, first in a convent and then at age 17 in a cloistered residence he keeps under an alias, Monsieur de la Souche. She soon meets and falls for Horace, the son of Arnolphe's friend Oronte. Horace unwittingly confides his affection for Agnès to Arnolphe, who plots to outwit Horace and marry Agnès. A misunderstanding takes shape: Arnolphe believes Agnès has agreed to marry him; Agnès believes she has been given permission to marry Horace. Ironically, Horace seeks Arnolphe's help in rescuing Agnès from M. de la Souche. Matters are resolved only when Oronte arrives with his friend Enrique and they announce Horace is to marry Enrique's daughter, who - surprise! -

turns out to Agnès. Game over. Moliere's comedy was first staged December 26, 1662 at the Palais Royal theatre for the Phillippe, Duke of Orleans, brother of Louis XIV, and met with public controversy. This prompted Moliere to release a clever sequel, *La Critique de L'École des femmes*, to help explain his unique style.

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.