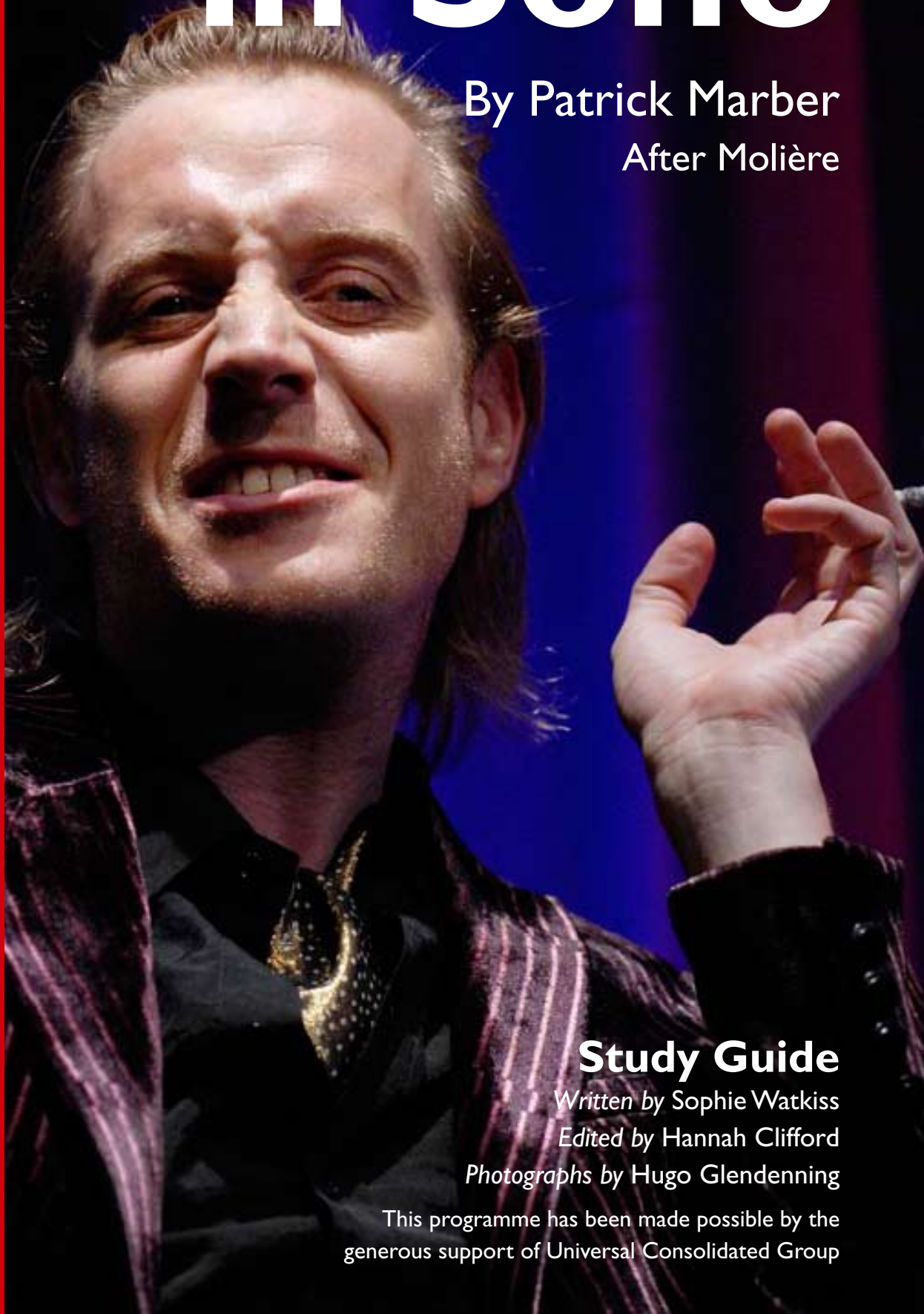


DOMMAR®

Don Juan in Soho

By Patrick Marber
After Molière



Study Guide

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Cast list and creative team

Cast: in order of speaking



STEPHEN WIGHT – Stan

DJ (Don Juan) describes **Stan** as his ‘accomplice’. He is **DJ’s** paid employer, whose job it is to ‘enable and facilitate’ **DJ’s** immoral lifestyle.



RICHARD FLOOD - Colm

Elvira’s brother, whose mission in the play is to protect the interests of his sister, whom he believes to be ‘a person of great purity, of quality...a colossal human being!’



RHYS IFANS - DJ

Is from a very old English family and is set to inherit his father’s Earldom. Is described by **Stan** as ‘a savage’, ‘a slag’ and ‘a cheating, betraying, lying dog.’



LAURA PYPER - Elvira

At the start of the action, **Elvira** has been married to **DJ** for just two weeks. We learn from her brother, **Colm**, that **DJ’s** pursuit of **Elvira** was ‘all an elaborate pose, a diabolical strategy for seduction.’ He campaigned for two years simply to ravish Elvira for a fortnight.



ABDUL SALIS - Pete/Vagabond



SEROCA DAVIS - Lottie/Ruby



JESSICA BROOKS - Mattie/Dalia



CHRIS CORRIGAN - Aloysius

Elvira's other brother, who wants to see DJ 'go to hell'.



TIM EAGLE - Charles



DAVID RYALL - Louis

DJ's elderly father who is 'so ashamed' of his son and 'so ashamed to be so disappointed in my own boy.'

Creative Team

Director	MICHAEL GRANDAGE
Designer	CHRISTOPHER ORAM
Lighting Designer	NEIL AUSTIN
Composer/Sound Designer	ADAM CORK
Casting Director	ANNE McNULTY

The authors: Patrick Marber and Molière

Patrick Marber

Born in London in 1964 and educated at Wadham College, Oxford.

He worked as a stand-up comedian for a number of years and then co-wrote and appeared in the comedy programmes 'On The Hour' (Radio 4), 'The Day Today' (BBC2), 'Knowing Me, Knowing You' (Radio 4 and BBC2), and 'Paul and Pauline Calf's Video Diaries' (BBC2).

His first play, *Dealer's Choice*, was first performed at the Royal National Theatre in February 1995, transferring to the West End later that year.

Marber's second play, *Closer* (1997), premiered at the Royal National Theatre in May 1997, transferring to the West End in March 1998. The play became an international hit and has been produced in more than a hundred cities in over thirty different languages across the world

Howard Katz, opened at the Royal National Theatre in June 2001.

After Miss Julie, his free version of Strindberg's *Miss Julie*, was staged at the Donmar in 2003. It was subsequently broadcast on BBC Television as part of the 'Performance' series in November 2005. A collected edition of his work, *Plays One*, was published in 2003.

The Musicians, commissioned as part of the Shell Connections 2004 Festival, was also staged at the National Theatre.

In addition to directing his own plays, Marber has directed Craig Raine's *1953* (Almeida), Dennis Potter's *Blue Remembered Hills* (Royal National Theatre, Lyttleton), David Mamet's *The Old Neighbourhood* (Royal Court) and Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker* (Comedy Theatre). In 2000 he acted in the West End revival of David Mamet's *Speed-the-Plow*, directed by Peter Gill.

In 2004 he adapted his play *Closer* for the screen. Other films include an adaptation of Patrick McGrath's *Asylum* and Zoe Heller's *Notes on a Scandal* which will be released in the UK in 2007.

Patrick Marber lives in London.

Molière

Born Jean-Baptiste Poquelin on 15 January 1622 and educated at the College de Clermont in Paris.

At the age of 21 he founded the Illustrious Theatre, for which he wrote his first major work, *The Blunderer*.

In October 1658, Molière and his troupe performed *The Love-Sick Doctor*, a farce, before King Louis XIV. He was subsequently granted the use of the Hotel du Petit Bourbon where they performed social satires such as *The Pretentious Ladies*

which delighted audiences but made powerful enemies of some of the King's followers. The Petit Bourbon was closed down in an attempt to drive Molière from the city but the King immediately granted Molière use of the Theatre du Palais Royal where he continued to perform for the rest of his life.

The Illustrious Theatre became the most respected dramatic troupe in Paris and was eventually awarded the coveted title 'Troupe of the King'.

On 17 February 1673, Molière suffered a haemorrhage while playing the role of the hypochondriac Argan in *The Imaginary Invalid* and died later at his home on the Rue Richelieu. Having been excommunicated by the church, local priests refused to allow him to be buried in holy ground. Four days later the King interceded and Molière was finally buried in the Cemetery Saint Joseph.

Other major works include *The School for Husbands* (1661), *The School for Wives* (1662), *The Misanthrope* (1666), *The Doctor in Spite of Himself* (1666), *Tartuffe* (1664, 1667, 1669), *The Miser* (1668) and *The Imaginary Invalid* (1673).

The character of Don Juan in dramatic literature

The Trickster of Seville and His Guest of Stone **by Tirso de Molina**

The play in which the character of Don Juan first appeared was *The Trickster of Seville and His Guest of Stone* (*El Burlador de Sevilla y convidado de piedra*), written by a Spanish monk, Fray Gabriel Tellez (1581-1648) using the professional name of Tirso de Molina. The play is believed to have been first staged in Seville in 1616 and it was first published in 1630. It is considered to be one of the most powerful dramas of the theatre of the golden age of Spain and has been described as 'the greatest of all Spanish plays.'¹ The character of Don Juan who appears in this play is, as the title indicates, a trickster, who adores cheating on women and believes he is socially invulnerable. According to Ian Watt, the playwright's aim appears to be to show his audience:

*...that a world of complete moral and social vacuity necessarily produces, in a young man of exceptional ability, energy and social advantage, a more or less unthinking contempt not only of the established social codes, but of all other human beings; he lives for himself alone and without fear of retribution.*²

The play is very much of its time, commenting, through the behaviour of Don Juan, on the general demeanour of the privileged youth of the Spanish court of the day, who devoted themselves to personal gain and brutal lechery, impervious to the consequences of their conduct and immune to any form of retribution. Indeed, the play has been considered to typify the inner meaning of the history of its time. As the historian William C. Atkinson has summarised:

*Immorality, beginning at the top and seeping downwards through the whole fabric of society, becomes the dominant mark of this age of retribution.*³



Discussion Point

To what extent would you say Atkinson's statement about seventeenth century Spain could apply to Great Britain in the twenty first century?

Tirso's Don Juan is punished when the statue of a Commander, who he has killed and whose daughter he has seduced, invites him to supper and drags him down to Hell.

'Tirso's Don Juan is not a comic rogue but an unredeemed villain; not a single good act or generous reflection can be laid to his charge. Tirso's aim was to force his audience to face corrective conclusions from the pitiless punishment God meted out to Don Juan's sole.'

Ian Watt⁴

? Did you know that . . .

It is believed that Tirso borrowed the idea for Don Juan's retribution from an ancient European folk tale known as *The Double Invitation*. The main outline of the story is that a young man is so intoxicated by life that he insults a dead man, usually in the form of a skull, and then invites him to dine with him. The dead man uncharacteristically keeps the appointment and then offers a return invitation. At this second meal, the dead man, accompanied by spirits either terrifies the young sinner into repentance, or punishes him by death or madness. Ian Watts cites an important study by Dorothy Eppelen MacKay in which she has collected eighty one examples of *The Double Invitation* folk tale. In four of the Spanish versions that she records, the dead man is represented in the form of a statue.⁵

***Don Juan or The Stone Feast* by Molière**

Tirso's play was taken up by Italian *commedia* troupes, who brought it to France with touring performances, and this is probably when Molière had his first contact with it. It was subsequently adapted for the French stage by two writers, Dorimond and Villiers, both in 1659. Their versions are hardly ever performed now, but they introduced the innovation of condensing the play down into one day, Don Juan's last. As the story was retold in dramatic form over the generations, the figure of the servant gained growing importance as a counterbalance to Don Juan. The dramatic action was focussing on the two characters as a couple, with the servant having equal dramatic status to the master. The focus was also moving away from the message of Tirso's morality play, with Don Juan emerging as a modern psychological type.⁶ These elements are all present in Molière's version of the play, which was first performed in Paris in 1665.

Molière chose to discard the verse form of the other versions, verse form being the standard form for tragedies and tragic-comedies, as well as 'serious' comedy. The result is a remarkable flexibility of language which gives a sharpness to the rhythms of the master/servant exchanges.

In essence, Molière took Tirso's play and adapted it to the manners and ideas of his time. Patrick Marber, in turn, has taken Molière's version of the play and adapted for his own time.

The Donmar's production of DON JUAN IN SOHO

Patrick Marber's response to Molière's play for modern audience

*'What's really shocking about the play, though, is Molière's audacity in leaving its hero so blithe and impassive at the centre of it. Stan, DJ's servant and tireless facilitator of a lifestyle that sickens him, is something like our voice on stage, and he can't help bleating his disapproval when his master's depravity reaches new depths. But it's a match flame next to the breathtaking bonfire of this man's untroubled hedonism. He is so perfectly unanimous with himself that it's obvious where the drama comes from.'*⁷

'Molière's anger was directed against the people who cavorted on the moral high ground's lush pasture in the fancy dress costumes of priests and bishops. Replace those with suits, limousines and jets of today's political cardinals and it's clear that Molière's teeth are still sharp.'

Simon Scardifield⁸

Hamish Pirie, Assistant Director on DON JUAN IN SOHO, points out that the concept of God, heaven, hell and eternal damnation was central to Molière's original text, for example, the statue was the source of eternal damnation. As God doesn't exist in the same way in modern times, the creative team had to find their own version of hell which would be accepted by an audience as a threat of comparable magnitude. So, in DON JUAN IN SOHO, the statue becomes DJ's alter ego in the predatory shape of Charles II, whose statue stands in Soho Square.

DJ (To Statue) What are you?

STATUE Recognition

Pause

DJ Are you alive

STATUE I come from the dead.

Pause

DJ Why?

STATUE You know why. You have always known.

DON JUAN IN SOHO, Act Three



STATUE You summoned me.

DJ When?

STATUE Last night. In the square. You invited me to join you.

DJ I was not myself

STATUE You are always yourself. It is that you cannot bear.

DJ I don't believe in you. I choose not to believe in you!

STATUE I *am* you.

They stare at each other. DJ understands now:

DJ Recognition.

DON JUAN IN SOHO, Act Five

In his version, Marber accentuates the role played by Elvira's vengeful brothers, so that they become DJ's ultimate nemesis. In this way, instead of DJ being consumed by the fires of Hell as he is in Molière's original, he is brutally stabbed by the brothers.

The creative team also had to consider the believability of the characters for a contemporary audience. For example, how to make Elvira pure in a modern world, which was why the choice was made to give her an Irish Catholic background and make her a passionate missionary to the third world. And so Marber's Elvira is cleverly re-imagined for a modern audience: rather than DJ scaling the walls of a convent to seduce her, the playwright gives us images of him 'hopping between refugee camps to spring her from that very modern citadel of virtue, the life of the foreign aid worker.'⁹

Approaching the characters in performance.

*'DON JUAN is very much a bawdy comedy, so Michael focused on making the characters more real in a modern world. He worked on backstory a lot with the actors to achieve this, while at the same time making sure we didn't lose the comedy. The outward physical movements and gestures of the actors – the sort you would see in Molière's stock characters – very much came from the actors during the rehearsal process. Michael referenced the term **farce***, allowing these elements to emerge and pull them out. So the farce was brought out rather than labelled on. It was a lot to do with pace. It is very important to have momentum in farce. There were also the practical considerations of making it a comedy with the asides; we had to work quite hard at finding where they should be placed on the Donmar's stage with audience on three sides.'*

Hamish Pirie, Assistant Director, DON JUAN IN SOHO

* **Farce** is from the French, meaning 'to stuff'. Farce is an extreme form of comedy that depends on quick tempo and flawless timing by the actors. Since farce is 'stuffed' with improbable events and far fetched coincidences, the audience must not be allowed time to think things through.



Discussion Point

After you have seen the Donmar's production of DON JUAN IN SOHO, try and identify at least two scenes that could be termed as farce. Justify your choices.

'He (Molière) worked out that you could spend an interesting evening at the theatre with a group of people who simply represent attitudes. All of his plays are about people who limit themselves with a series of false strategies and get their comeuppance because of it. It's a way of looking at the world which is very effective dramatically and very satisfying for the audience because they always control more of the facts than any of the characters on stage.'

Christopher Hampton¹⁰

‘Molière’s characters have both universal and particular characteristics: they represent both timeless human types and types belonging to his own age. “It is the business of comedy”, Molière wrote in L’Impromptu de Versailles, ‘to present a general picture of all the defects of men, and especially of the men of our own age.’”

Andrew Calder, Molière: The Theory and Practice of Comedy¹¹

As can be seen from these quotations, Molière used stock types and stock situations which his audience could readily recognise. This meant that his work was never far away from farce. The challenge for the creative team of DON JUAN IN SOHO was to make these characters seem real to a contemporary audience: the **stock character** is only justified on the grounds of its vitality. If it does not spring to life, it becomes a **stereotype**.

? Did you know that . . .

A **stock character** is a character who represents a particular personality type or characteristic of human behaviour. Stock characters appear throughout the history of theatre, with Greek new comedy and Roman comedy providing the original examples, such as the intriguer, the parasite, the sceptic, the virgin, the courtesan and the wily slave. The commedia dell’arte elaborated on these types in the characters of Harlequin the wily servant, Capitano the braggart soldier, Brighella the intriguer, Pantaloon the cuckold, and Olivetta the doxy.

A **stereotype** is a character based on the assumption that all members of a particular race, creed, or class behave in the same way, so that a few devices – an accent, religious article, jargon words – serve to delineate the character.

Character work

In *L’Impromptu de Versailles* (1663) Molière describes himself and his actors at work creating their roles. He begins by giving incisive character sketches of each role so that the actors will have a clear understanding of the parts they have to play. He continues by offering suggestions as to how they should look, move and speak in order to represent them. Listed below are character sketches for three of the main characters in DON JUAN

IN SOHO, DJ, Stan and Elvira, devised by listing firstly everything that they say about themselves, and secondly everything that is said about them by other characters. Read through them carefully and then work on the practical exercises which follow.

Character Sketches

DJ

What DJ says about himself

- Down with selfishness and up with *me* – a dippy old hippy who's generous with his *lurve*. Yes, I've a penchant for the perverse but who doesn't, in their dreams? All I seek is pleasure in all its rich and various forms – where's the *harm*?...I'm not a baddie, I'm good news! What's not to love? I'm the Kofi Annan of copulation!
- You (Stan) know I don't believe in anything.
- I *know* what I am and I understand it. I'm a child, a creature only of want. I blame no one. I choose this life and I own it. And no one owns *me*.
- I love this city. I love all cities. I'm in love with everyone and everything.
- This will be the first time I've slept alone...for as long as I can remember.
- I am 'uberly' human. This is *homo sapiens* in his natural animal state, existing only in the present moment.



What other people say about DJ

STAN

- (*aside*) Can I betray the man who has clothed and fed me these ten years?
- Oh, the modern monster *conceals* himself. Don't expect a fiend to be fanged.
- Ever seen a dictator with blood on his hands?
- You see, what you're dealing with here is a savage, he's a *pirate*. Forgive my lack of discretion but the man's a slag.
- ...he's a cheating, betraying, lying dog... He's had every privilege known to man and pissed it up a wall – as a point of principle!
- I wish there was a hell he could burn in forever.
- ...he doesn't want to be loved.
- (*aside*) Please don't be charmed, he's not a loveable rogue. He really isn't.
- He's from a very old English family.
- Don't you care? A waiter died tonight, thrown overboard! And that other feller, Adam, he's a gonner. He's not waking up...you caused it!
- I think you're a misogynist.
- Because your mum died you're always expecting women to reject you.
- You fear being alone. You can't be alone. You're never alone. That's the truth.
- (*aside*) You see, just when you're beginning to warm to the man he reveals his true colours.
- You just don't get it! Your father drove five hours! And now he's sobbing in the street!
- I know you don't care! It's just I had *hopes*! Last night, there was genuine compassion in you!
- ...you're not human.
- The world is a better place without him.

ELVIRA

- ...you (DJ) pursued me to the bleakest places on earth; Rwanda, Darfur, Baghdad –wherever I was working...You marched against land mines, ran a marathon for Oxfam, held the hands of leprous children. You forsook leatherware and converted to veganism. You did Yoga!
- He's *my husband*. 'Til death. I can't 'unlove' him.
- I know your dark purpose, but I cannot hate you for it. You are you and this is what you do.
- I know you have no belief in God. You scorn him. I think you are a nihilist posing as a libertine.
- What terrible darkness you must inhabit to be so morally deformed.

- Though you do not believe, I beg you to *try* – swear perhaps on your ‘unbelief’ – to try to live humanely, to *join* our strange, desperate, contrary species instead of setting yourself apart. We *need* you.
- My fear is that something dreadful awaits you, that ‘horror’ will find you.
- You are entranced by sensation – you share this sickness with the society that spawned you.

COLM

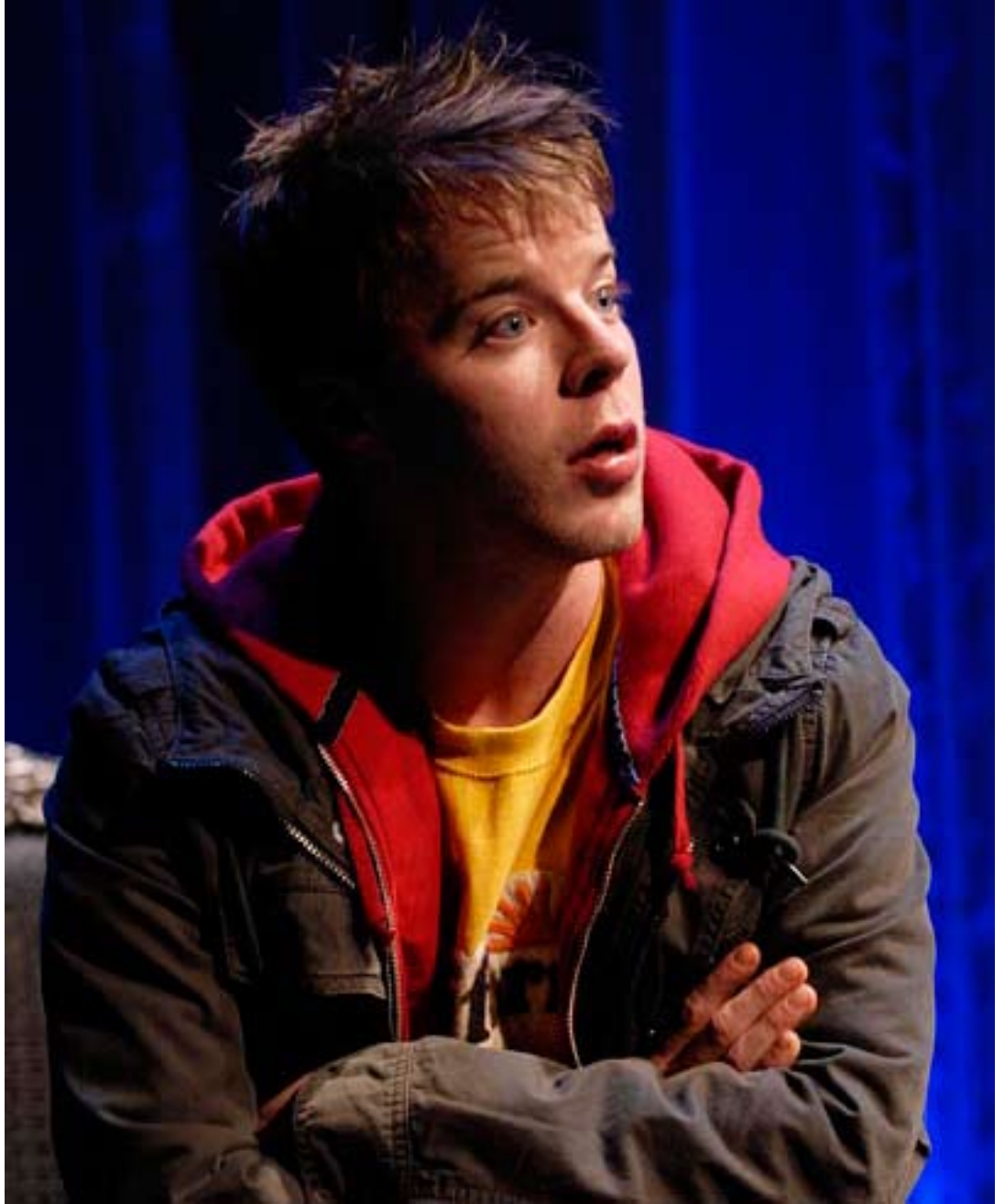
- It was all an elaborate pose, a diabolical strategy for seduction. He campaigned for two years simply to ravish you (Elvira) a fortnight.
- He saved my life...He has done a good deed...

ALOYSIUS

- YOU ARE NOT FAMILY!
- I want him to go to hell.
- You can save yourself if you apologize. We will kick the shit out of you but we will let you live. If you apologize – and convince us you mean it – then you won’t die. We want your apology: for what you did to our sister. For what you did to countless others. For how you live. For who you are.

LOUIS

- I wished I were shocked but nothing you do surprises me.
- ...you’re not young anymore...You simply can’t, you just can’t continue to live for pleasure any more...Aside from the decadent selfishness of it all you have responsibilities.
- Continuity. Belonging. Family. Home. Why do you so despise these things? Why are simple human values so abhorrent to you?...What strange path presented itself to you?
- You demean the human spirit...You’ve never done an honest day’s work in your life! You have ponced and preened and primped your way through...
- You stand to inherit a fortune. Don’t force me to cut you off...
- Honour! It must be in you somewhere.
- I’m so ashamed of you...and so ashamed to be so disappointed in my own boy...
- What terrible darkness you must inhabit to be so morally deformed.
- I will not tolerate another vowel of his abuse.



Stan

What Stan says about himself

- I've wasted the best years of my youth mopping up after him (DJ). I've had enough of his broody Byronic bullshit.
- I am paid to enable and...facilitate his lifestyle! I am the keeper of the Blackberry.
- I am what you (Colm) most refute me to be: a man of integrity...sucked into a cyclone of depravity.
- I'm an unfuckable troll.
- My family has worked for his (DJ's) for centuries
- I'll drive a minicab, I don't care! I just want a quiet life. Nice wife, kids. A little garden. The odd holiday.
- To be in your (DJ's) orbit, it's so...I can't give it up!
- The night sky used to terrify me. It's so huge.
- The abuse. I won't tolerate another vowel of it.
- I want to be loved. I thought you (DJ) LOVED me! I thought I was special!

What other people say about Stan

DJ

- You hilarious, little munchkin.
- There's an art to seduction and (forgive me) a fellow who is no oil painting might prosper *more* by whinging *less* and learning from the master.
- ...you're a prude.
- Think of me as a man on a humanitarian mission and you'll cease to resemble a wet cod. It's no good stomping around like Rumpelstiltskin.
- I know your little belly, you're always nibbling on something. (*Stan takes a chip. And another. And another*) Have the bag, old chum.
- And where were *you*, trusted Tonto, while I was up against it? (*Sees the lit joint*) Ah! Ah ha! (*Stan tries to hide it*) Morality's a see-saw isn't it? Up and down!
- You wicked little gnome!
- You may be a disloyal, little runt but you roll an absolute ripper of a joint.
- We can't be parted, we're joined at the groin!
- You're my accomplice.
- I'm fond of you, what more d'you want?
- I will not pretend to love you when I don't.

COLM

- How can you associate with this loathsome creature? Aren't you ashamed of yourself?
- Maggot! Every part of you is corrupted, you're a moral black hole.
- You, Sir, are a low crawling insect.
- You're just a dogsbody!
- You're nothing but a fly on a horse's shitey arse!
- ...the sidekick is biddable. He loathes him (DJ), would welcome the justice we'll exact upon him.

LOUIS

- Just because you're a servant it doesn't give your betters the right to take the piss.



Elvira **What Elvira says about herself**

- he (DJ) has *perverted* me – defiled me, spun me from fear to ferocity.
- he unleashed me...Oh – the sinful, filthy fantasies he drew out of me! What I would do, what I would have him watch me do – ohh!
- his terrible disdain – a punishment for my debauchery. He has used me, broken me...and now he spurns me as a spoilt child discards a once favoured toy, so – so- so casually, so brutally...oh, I am not like this. I am strong but he has obliterated me.
- I am cleansed. You have burnished me. I am clearer than I have ever been. And I thank you for that. I know the shape of my life now. My purpose is defined for me. I will return to my vocation and dedicate myself to ending poverty in this world. There will be no time for other loves. I loved you. I still love you.

What other people say about Elvira

COLM

- Elvira is a person of great purity, of quality – she’s a *colossal* human being!
- Elvira stills loves him.
- Our sister is dying of a broken heart.

ALOYSIUS

- My little sister is suicidal.

STAN

- You were virginal, there’s not a lot of that about. And you’re...very lovely...
- Elvira’s been *harmed*, she’ll be destroyed.

DJ

- ...I’m afraid your relentless do-gooding has done my head in. You live in a world of brown rice and Birkenstocks, your favourite drink is a goat’s milk latte.
- ...she’ll *recover*. She’s a tough cookie, tougher than you think.
- Wasn’t she fantastic? The saucy minx! Her dishevelment, her passion, that rambling, studenty spluge.

LOUIS

- Elvira is jolly nice and so dedicated to you (DJ). And to ‘people’ in general. She is noble of birth and of spirit...An angel! Why cause her such appalling sorrow?



Practical Exercise

Read through the studies carefully, and, by building up a picture of the characters, decide what qualities and physical characteristics you would look for in an actor when casting these roles.

Choose one of the characters from the studies above, either DJ, Stan, or Elvira, who you would like to approach playing in performance. Identify one quote from your character and decide what the appropriate movements and gestures would be to accompany this line. For example, DJ could deliver his line, ‘I’m in love with everyone and everything’ with open arms, as if embracing everything in the space around him.

Share these as a group. What similarities emerge from members of the group playing the same character? What ideas does this exercise give you for playing your character in performance?

In pairs, playing your original choice of character, take one of the short extracts from DON JUAN IN SOHO listed below and experiment with staging it, incorporating the relevant physical movements and gestures discovered in the previous exercise.

Extract 1. Afternoon. Winter. The large open plan lobby of a swank, modern hotel in Soho. DJ enters the lobby, observing his wife's brother just leaving.

Enter DJ, immaculate in a bespoke suit. He stares at the exit. Then eyeballs STAN.

DJ Was that the portly oirish farmer?

STAN Where?

DJ Just exciting. Trailing peat.

STAN ...I think it might've been...

DJ Well was it? Don't lie, you're a feeble dissembler.

STAN It was him.

DJ You covered for me?

STAN The best I could.

DJ Hmm. *(Sits)* Furnish me, please.

STAN *palms him a wrap, sticks a cigarette in DJ's mouth, lights it and pushes the scotch two inches towards him.*

DJ God bless you.

DJ *luxuriates a moment, content.* **STAN** *hovers, tense.*

STAN We might want to skedaddle fairly scene. I think Elvira's on her way. Despite my guile it's possible the brother inferred a certain 'furtivity' in the building.

DJ *seems unconcerned, smokes, drinks, puts his feet up.*

DJ Have you pined for me this last fortnight? You have, haven't you, you hilarious, little munchkin.

STAN Actually, I did some quite serious thinking.

DJ *(mock concerned)* Ohhh. Well, ooh. You're perfectly free to leave.

STAN How could I when the money's so good?

DJ I've told you, you will have your wages.

STAN Yeah but when?

DJ Oh, don't be so mercenary! Your perks are more than generous...

DON JUAN, Act One.

Extract 2.

Setting as above. Elvira confronts DJ over his adultery.

ELVIRA Is it true?

DJ *stares at her, distantly.*

ELVIRA 'I'm just going out for a packet of fags'. That was twenty four hours ago.

DJ *(holds up a packet)* And here they are.

ELVIRA And you've been here with this...this...Latvian supermodel.* Well?
(pause) Well?

DJ Me?? Oh, yes. Yes, indeed. I am that trouper.

ELVIRA We got back from honeymoon *yesterday*. We've been married a *fortnight*.

DJ Is it really that long?

ELVIRA You made a vow before God.

DJ *(mock apologetically)* Not known at this address.

ELVIRA Are – what – is it – are you having a panic attack about getting married?

DJ No! Lord, no! I hugely enjoyed our marriage.

Silence. **ELVIRA** *absorbs the information.*

ELVIRA So – so – do – so you want to – to separate? Or to – to...d-divorce??

DJ Why not?

ELVIRA Well...*which?*

DJ It's all much of a muchness.

ELVIRA No it's not! What do you WANT, damn you!

DON JUAN, Act One.

*In Patrick Marber's script, this line is attributed to Colm, who, for the purposes of this exercise, has been omitted from the scene.



Discussion Point

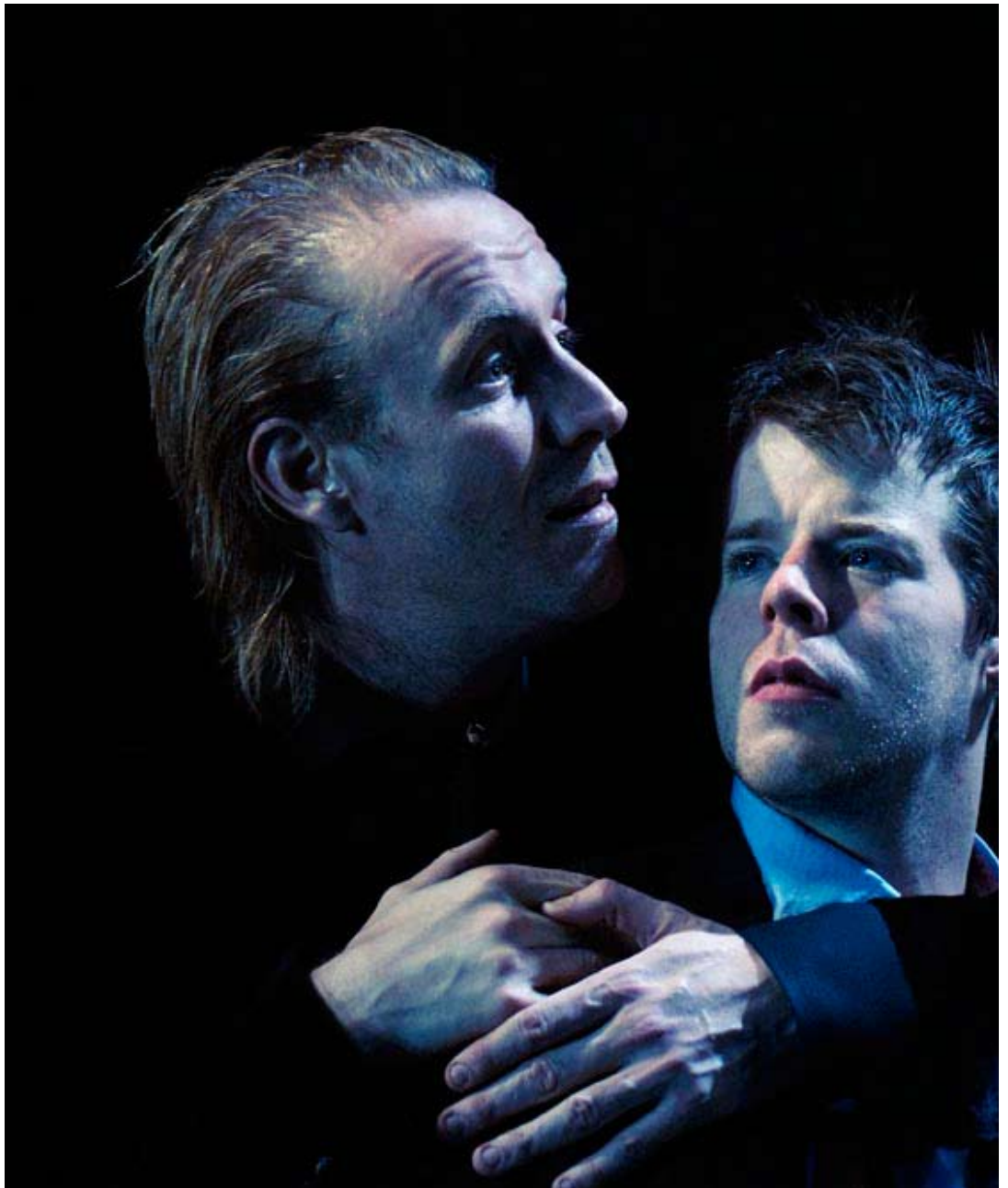
Molière's protagonists all have a dominant passion, a fixed idea, a mind locked frenziedly into a single track. From working with the character of DJ in the above exercise, what would you define as being DJ's dominant passion?

? Did you know that . . .

DJ could be described as an antihero because he is a protagonist who possesses none of the qualities, such as honesty and unselfishness, of the traditional hero.

👁 Observation point

Stan is DJ's close confidant. His dramatic function is to reveal the true Don Juan to the audience.



Comparing scenes

One of the things that made Molière's play seem shocking in its day was Don Juan's absolute indifference to Christian codes of behaviour: Religion and morality are left to be defended rather ineptly by Don Juan's servant, who cannot hope to succeed in argument against his manipulative and eloquent master. One of the scenes that the authorities forced Molière to make changes to was in Act Three, where Don Juan goads a vagabond to blaspheme against God in exchange for money. The scene is printed below, followed by Patrick Marber's version. Read the two scenes through carefully and answer the questions which follow.

Extract from Act Three, Don Juan, by Molière. Setting: a forest.

DON JUAN: ...all the time we've been arguing I think we've been getting lost. Get that man's attention over there and ask him the way.

SGANARELLE: Hey, you, the man over there. Mate, my friend, can I have a word, please. Could you show us the way into town.

POOR MAN: All you have to do is follow this road, sirs, and turn to the right when you reach the end of the forest. But I warn you to be on your guard, there have been robbers around these parts recently.

DON JUAN: We're much obliged, my friend, thank you ever so much

POOR MAN: If monsieur wouldn't mind helping me out with a little charity.

DON JUAN: Ah, I see your advice wasn't entirely selfless.

POOR MAN: I'm a poor man, monsieur, I've been living on my own in this wood for ten years, and I'll be sure to pray God to give you all kinds of blessings.

DON JUAN: Don't worry too much about other people's affairs and just pray for him to give you some clothes.

SGANARELLE: You see you don't know my master. All he believes in is two and two are four, and four and four are eight.

DON JUAN: What's your trade here, in amongst the trees?

POOR MAN: I spend all day praying for the prosperity of all the people who give me something.

DON JUAN: Then I can't imagine that you're not pretty well-off.

POOR MAN: Alas, monsieur, no-one is in more dire need than me.

DON JUAN: You must be joking. A man who spends all day praying must surely have his affairs in good order.

POOR MAN: I can assure you, monsieur, that most of the time I don't even have a piece of bread to put between my teeth.

DON JUAN: Well I think it's very odd that you are so poorly paid for your pains. I'll give you a gold coin in exchange for a curse.

POOR MAN: You'd have me commit a sin like that?

DON JUAN: It's just a matter of seeing whether you want to earn a gold coin or not. Here's one you can have if you curse. There it is. But you have to curse.

POOR MAN: Monsieur.

DON JUAN: You can't have it otherwise.

SGANARELLE: Oh go on, just a little one, there's no harm in it.

DON JUAN: Take it, look, there it is. But give me a curse first.

POOR MAN: No monsieur. I'd rather die of hunger.

DON JUAN: Alright then. I'll give it to you for the love of humanity.

Parallel scene from Act Three, DON JUAN IN SOHO, by Patrick Marber, after Molière. Setting: Soho Square.

DJ: Now, we need some rizlas. Ask if he's got some, they usually do.
He points to the sleeping vagabond.

STAN: He's in his kip.

DJ: No askee, no spliffy. One final task before you terminate your employment. (*flirty*) I'll give you a bonus.

STAN: How much?

DJ: God. You're venal! I'll give you a gold farthing – now get on with it.

STAN *approaches the sleeping VAGABOND. Gives him a little nudge. He stirs.*

STAN *shakes him a little and he falls off the bench.*

STAN: Sorry, mate.

The VAGABOND wakes, scared.

VAGABOND: Wh-what?!

STAN: Easy. Peace! Very sorry to disturb you but I don't spose you've got a rizla?

The VAGABOND searches his pockets and finds some.

STAN: Cheers, mate!

DJ *hands his tin to STAN who starts rolling a joint. DJ nods his thanks to the VAGABOND.*

DJ: Thanks for our generosity. Damn good of you.

Pause

VAGABOND: May it please Allah.

DJ: Excuse me??

VAGABOND: May it please Allah.



DJ: I must warn you that your rizla will be used to consume the weed of the infidel. I don't know if your God would approve...

VAGABOND: Allah is merciful.

DJ: Thank Christ for that.

STAN *looks up, senses trouble...*

VAGABOND: And if you were to make a small donation he would be most grateful.

DJ: Would he now. *(Sighs)* Is nothing freely given in this world?

VAGABOND: Just a small contribution.

DJ: Tell you what, I'll give you my watch. It's worth six grand. *He takes it off and dangles it before the vagabond.*

DJ: You may examine the goods.

The VAGABOND does so. Then he reaches for the watch but DJ whips it away.

DJ: Uh uh! *(pause)* You can have it...if you blaspheme against Allah.

STAN: *(aside)* Oh, Lord.

VAGABOND I don't understand.

DJ: I will give you this watch if you insult your God. After all, what's he ever done for you, eh? Honestly?

VAGABOND: He is in my soul. He protects me. I praise him. Always.

DJ: Look at you! You're a beggar! You've got nothing! You *smell*. You've got poo on your trousers. A snail has slimed its way across your shoulder – or is it spittle? What the fuck has Allah done for you?!

STAN: Please don't!

DJ: We must be realistic about these things, it's the bullshit I can't stand.

He dangles the watch.

DJ: You'll get a grand from any pawnbroker in town.

The VAGABOND stares at the watch. Wants it.

DJ: Now please. I'd be delighted to give it to you. It's a very special watch, a wedding gift from my wife. Look, the inscription: *(Irish)* 'My heart, my soul, forever.' You see? Now we both know you want it. So just one teeny, little blaspheme and it's yours. Say. ..'Allah has crapped on me.'

VAGABOND: No.

DJ: But he *has*! It's true.

VAGABOND: Allah is merciful.

Pause

DJ: Call him a cunt.

STAN: *(aside)* You see, just when you're beginning to warm to the man he reveals his true colours – I told you!

DJ: Alright. If that's too harsh. Call him a naughty old so and so.

VAGABOND: I will not insult him.

DJ: Call him a twerp.

VAGABOND: I will not blaspheme.

They stare at each other. A long time. Finally:

DJ: *(casually)* Then have it.

DJ gives the VAGABOND the watch. He quickly slips it into his pocket. Stan hands him back his rizlas and he goes on his way.



Practical Exercise

To make the blasphemy work for a modern audience, what changes does Patrick Marber make to the character of the vagabond?

How does Stan's role differ in the scene from that of his counterpart, Sganarelle?

What other changes does Marber make and what impact do these changes have on the audience's reception of the scene?

Are the shifts in status between the characters the same in each version?

To what extent does the vagabond come out as the honourable party in each of the scenes?

Soho as a setting

'In this Sodom and Gomorrah you people call 'Soho'

Colm, Scene One



The action of Molière's play is supposedly set in Sicily, but his audiences would have easily identified Don Juan as representative of the uninhibited French nobleman of the mid-seventeenth century. Patrick Marber located his version of the play in Soho, as he felt that it is a place where the events of the play could happen and where you could find the characters who inhabit the play.¹² The audience can believe that a man of DJ's wealth and seediness exists here.

In the play, DJ alludes to the history of Soho:

Do you know the derivation of 'Soho'? It's rather good: it's a hunting cry, (imitates a hunter) So-ho! So-ho! In the seventeenth century this was all fields, a gentleman would hunt fox and deer, right here. So-ho!

DJ, Act Three

Now it is DJ who is the hunter, chasing and catching women whose contact details are stored in his BlackBerry. Indeed, he even refers to one of his female prey as 'the fox'.



Designing DON JUAN IN SOHO

Molière's play was set in a different location for each of the five acts, requiring changes of scenery for each act. At one point the scene changes in the middle of an act, as we move into the Commander's mausoleum. All this was a rare extravagance at the time, and sure to be a box-office draw. It was still quite an innovation in the French theatre to draw on the influences of the Italian theatre by making extensive use of a deep stage with wing-space to create an illusion of depth with successive flats, and a backdrop with a cut-away section for even deeper perspective. An inventory of works to be carried out by the scene painters for Molière's company survives, and details the following scenery:

- Act I:** A palace consisting of five flats on each side, and then a garden consisting of two, with the first flat 18 feet high.
- Act II:** A small hamlet made of five flats, with a cave to hide the backdrop, beyond which we see two flats showing the sea.



Act III A forest of three flats on each side, and one full-width flat showing a temple overgrown with greenery.

Followed by:

The interior of a temple (five flats), with the back of the building on the backdrop.

Act IV: A room consisting of three flats on each side, and a full-width flat for the back wall of the room.

Act V: A town with five flats on each side, and on the backdrop a city gate and two small flats showing more of the town.

What's missing from this list is any idea of how the flames of hell were represented. Molière's critics at the time talked of their objections to his 'painted flames', so we know that some fairly tinny theatrical trick was used.¹³

Michael Grandage was very keen to see Patrick Marber's version of the play also use different locations, because he 'directs using space, by colouring space'¹⁴. The locations, as specified in Marber's script, are:



- Act I** Afternoon. Winter. The large open lobby of a swank, modern hotel in Soho. A long slab of strange, black slate for the reception desk. A few stools shaped like garden gnomes. A faux Louis XIV sofa. A preposterous lamp.
- Act II** Late night. A hospital. Accident & Emergency department. Strip lighting, rows of chairs.
- Act III** Soho Square. Two in the morning. A Statue of King Charles II, face dimly lit.
- Act IV** Six in the morning. DJ's house in Meard Street, Soho. The main room.
- Act V** A gentleman's club. The morning room. 7.30 pm.
The street outside the club.
Very distant sounds of Soho. Seemingly miles away.
Soho Square



Practical Exercise

As a designer, how would you accommodate all of the different locations of the play into your design? Pay particular attention to Act V which requires four different settings to flow seamlessly into each other.

Further reading, footnotes and bibliography

Suggestion for further reading

Patrick Marber, *Plays One*, Methuen, 2003.

Molière, *Don Juan and Other Plays*, Oxford World Classics, 2003.

David Whitton, *Molière, Don Juan*, Plays in Production Series, Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Footnotes

(Endnotes)

- 1 Gerald Brenan, *The Literature of the Spanish People* (Cambridge, 1951), p. 218, quoted in Ian Watt, *Myths of Modern Individualism*, (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 92.
- 2 Ian Watt, *Myths of Modern Individualism*, (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 112.
- 3 William C. Atkinson, *A History of Spain and Portugal* (Harmondsworth, 1960), p. 168, quoted *ibid*, p.111.
- 4 Ian Watt, *Myths of Modern Individualism*, (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 118.
- 5 See Dorothy Epplen MacKay, *The Double Invitation in the Legend of Don Juan* (Stanford, 1943), cited in Ian Watt, *Myths of Modern Individualism*, (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 113.
- 6 See David Whitton, *Molière: Don Juan*, Cambridge University press, 1995, Chapter 1 for a comprehensive background to Molière and the legend of Don Juan.
- 7 'Don Juan – 350 years of offensive charm', by Simon Scardifield, programme for DON JUAN IN SOHO, by Patrick Marber, after Molière, Donmar Warehouse, 2006. (Simon Scardifield is a translator and writer; he provided the literal translation for this version of the play).
- 8 'Don Juan – 350 years of offensive charm', by Simon Scardifield, *op.cit*.
- 9 'Don Juan – 350 years of offensive charm', by Simon Scardifield, *op.cit*.
- 10 Christopher Hampton quoted in Alistair Owen, ed, *Hampton on Hampton*, Faber and Faber, (London), 2005, p. 36.
- 11 See Andrew Calder, *Molière: The Theory and Practice of Comedy*, The Athlone Press, (London), 1993, p. 16.
- 12 Interview with Hamish Pirie, Assistant director, DON JUAN IN SOHO.

13 Simon Scardifield, introductory notes to *Don Juan* by Molière, literal translation (unpublished).

14 Interview with Hamish Pirie, Assistant director, DON JUAN IN SOHO.

Bibliography

David Whitton, *Molière: Don Juan*, Cambridge University press, 1995.

Ian Watt, *Myths of Modern Individualism*, Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Andrew Calder, *Molière: The Theory and Practice of Comedy*, The Athlone Press, (London), 1993.

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a special insight into the theatre

The Donmar Warehouse is an intimate (not for profit) 251 seat theatre located in the heart of London's West End. The theatre attracts almost 100,000 people to its productions a year. Since 1992, under the Artistic Direction of Michael Grandage and his predecessor, Sam Mendes, the theatre has presented some of London's most memorable theatrical experiences as well as garnered critical acclaim at home and abroad. With a diverse artistic policy that includes new writing, contemporary reappraising of European classics, British and American drama and music theatre, the Donmar has created a reputation for artistic excellence over the last 12 years and has won 25 Olivier Awards, 12 Critics' Circle Awards, 10 Evening Standard Awards and 10 Tony Awards for Broadway transfers.

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