TARTUFE:
DEMONSTRATING A SYNTHESIS OF TRAINING

A Thesis
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by
William Strzempek, B.A.

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Approved by
Dr. Alan Woods
Department of Theatre
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This thesis is based on work done in creating the title role of Jean Baptiste Moliere's Tartuffe, translated by Richard Wilbur. The production was directed by Byron Ringland, and presented at The Ohio State University Stadium II Theatre, February 23 through March 6, 1982. The production was conceptually based on the works of Johannes Vermeer, the seventeenth century Dutch painter, in a realistic style. The play was set in France, 1648.
INTRODUCTION

An artist uses certain tools and develops techniques in order to bring about a finished work and artistic creation. In addition to these tools and techniques, his life experience and emotional spectrum serve as a palette from which he can color his work. The artist, working toward his intended ideal, varies the application of his techniques on the elements of his palette. His choices in this work process yield a product that is a unique creation, which differs from work of the same artist, and stands apart from the work of other artists. This creative process is true of the musician with his arrangements of chords, and the painter putting his pigment to canvas; it is similarly a process of technique, choice and application which an actor uses in creating a role.

In the following pages, I will describe the process that I have used in creating my performance of Tartuffe. I will draw from the training I received in the M.F.A. Acting program of the Department of Theatre at The Ohio State University, from 1979 to 1982. I will explore the techniques learned and my application of those techniques. An evaluation of my personal improvement will suggest areas that need further concentration. Tartuffe, then, demonstrates a synthesis of training and experience, and culminates a three-year period of growth.

My progress toward the role of Tartuffe has evolved through the conquering of disparate problems both in a variety of other roles and in classwork over the past years. In many instances, the solutions to particular problems were not totally found during the course of evolving a single role. I continued to seek answers to similar problems in succeeding roles. Tartuffe brings together the solutions I have found in overcoming the personal difficulties inherent in various areas of my acting. The best aspects of my craft at this point in my career have cohered into a strong whole. This by no means implies my total achievement of conquering my acting problems—the craft of acting is one of searching for continual self improvement.

My first role at OSU in the autumn of 1979 was Jim Don in Gold Dust. Gold Dust is a musical based on Molière's The Miser, set in a nineteenth-century mining camp in Colorado. The role of Jim Don was two-dimensionally written, and included a few song and dance numbers. My performance emphasized shortcomings in my training such as lack of vocal control, physical tensions, and a broad, presentational style of acting. The most positive feature of my performance was the great reservoir of energy that was at my command. However, it proved, in fact, to be an overabundance of energy which resulted in leading me
to a very unfocussed presence on stage. After my first production, I was sadly aware that I needed to develop a stronger voice and the ability to bring greater depth to my characterizations, as well as the need to control my release of energy.

I had enrolled in graduate training with the intent to discover which theatre discipline interested me most. I entered the theatre program concentrating in directing. By the end of the first year, I realized my heart and potential were in acting. Being kept out of the performing arena was very unsettling to me, and I had learned that acting was, indeed, something I simply had to do. I knew that that commitment to acting would demand a lot of work if I hoped to improve.

At the end of the first full year in spring of 1980, I was cast as Vladimir in Waiting for Godot, in a production in the intimate Studio Theatre on West Campus. In creating this role, I produced some of my most successful work at Ohio State. The entire process was a most satisfying experience, and reflected a great amount of growth.

I credit my success in Godot to several factors. First, my renewed passion to act gave me a great drive as I revelled in the involvement of creating a role once again. Second, the effects of a year of intense training and reshaping were beginning to be evident. I was technically in better condition than I was nine months earlier. Third, I found a personal bond with the character of Vladimir which, although impossible to describe, was nonetheless vital to my success. The inexplicable chemistry of the right role for the right actor resulted in a performance that was, for the most part, devoid of the presentational quality that marked Gold Dust. Instead, Vladimir developed as a real person, with depth and unique, human behavior. For the first time in acting, I had experienced the feeling of living the part on stage and of becoming the character as his life evolved on stage. The style of acting was more subtle and less elaborate than anything I had experienced before.

Despite the achievements made in Godot, my next work, over the summer in Thurber Theatre, did not maintain the close contact with character that I had established. As Jack Worthing in The Importance of Being Earnest, the sublety in playing the role evaded me. I again resorted to a broader style of playing. The distinction between the two roles was that while in Godot I felt at ease enough to simply "be" the character amongst the small audience, in Earnest I began to "act" the part in order to project the character's wit, style, and mannerisms to the large auditorium. There was an edge of exaggeration to much of my work in Earnest, which hindered my chances of becoming a real person with depth.

More disconcerting to me than the differences in theatre sizes
were the differences I made in approaching the two roles. With Godot, I went into production not especially liking or understanding the script. Earnest was a complete opposite: I loved the script and was convinced I could perform in it quite capably, I entered rehearsals for Godot in a much more open frame of mind, ready to learn, explore, and find the keys to the character—I was prepared to work. Freshness and spontaneity were always present because I did not know what to expect. I was continually discovering new facets of the play, and eventually came to be quite fond of the script. The same was not true of the Earnest rehearsal period. I had a great many preconceptions about the way I would play the part, and so I cut off my desire to explore new avenues in approaching the character. I preplanned my performance, and destroyed the quality of freshness and spontaneity. I was more interested in producing a funny show than in developing the character. I assumed I naturally would be convincing as Jack Worthing without involving myself in all the hard work. In retrospect, I see that I shortchanged the character, the director and myself by my failure to commit myself to honest work.

I also learned from the Earnest production the great necessity for developing the voice. Earnest was my first introduction to a play that relied heavily on vocal technique, and I was not capable of handling the language in a satisfactory manner. My skills at the beginning of rehearsals lacked precision. Beginning in the rehearsal process, and following through the next years' classwork, I applied myself more vigorously to my vocal development.

In the autumn of 1980 I performed three roles in three different plays. The first, in Stadium II Theatre, was Reverend Winemiller in Summer and Smoke. The experience was as embarrassing for me as Gold Dust had been exactly a year before. I showed no signs of improvement from a year of training, and in fact, regressed. The energy that was so much a part of Jim Don in Gold Dust was never summoned up in Summer and Smoke, and I merely went through the paces of the role night after night, my concentration more on the lighting instruments than on the problems of the play. My vocal work was strident, sloppy and unsupported. My acting contained little honesty and depth. Physical tensions, over which I had been gaining improvement, were rampant in my body. My commitment to exploring the world of the character was, for the most part, lacking, due to my distaste for the play and the production.

Milt Manville in Luv followed quickly thereafter and was much more successful in terms of my growth as an actor. Amongst the three person cast there was a great amount of trust. This resulted in an intimate ensemble feeling to the play that was aided by its intimate setting in the Royer Lab Theatre. We felt secure enough in ourselves and in each other to risk that security by having our characters fight very hard for the things they wanted. It was a scramble to keep on top of the other characters, and ahead of the fast-paced
script. The closeness of the playing space, the vitality of the characters, and the continual threat of being thrown off balance by the events of the play forced me to react and behave in a realistic manner. The script demanded large commitments from me as an actor and forced me to go after strong objectives in a human way. I had no time to plot and manufacture a performance; rather, it evolved each time with spontaneity from the whirlwind of stage action. In Luv, too, I was beginning to see the benefits of my voice training. The Lessac voice technique (which will be discussed below) allowed me to get through the demanding play without injuring my vocal mechanisms. Luv was the first lengthy play I repeatedly performed without turning hoarse from the effort.

Next, Cabin 12 was produced in Royer Lab Theatre. The part of Harold McCollough is intended for a man of fifty years of age. I knew I would not be expected to convincingly portray that age, so I felt freer to experiment with the inner emotions of the man rather than his external appearance, without sacrificing the integrity of the play. I worked extensively on emotional exercises, trying to find points of similarity between my own experiences and those of the character. Slowly, and with much difficulty, the interior workings of the character's guilt, remorse, drunkenness, and deception began to be understood by me. Without worrying about external consideration (and, admittedly, my vocal and physical economy suffered due to this lesser degree concern) I was able to free myself to create an emotionally honest and draining portrait. It is also important to note that, as was the case in Godot, I began rehearsals not liking or understanding the play, and this distance from the work compelled me to search the fabric of the play in greater depth than I had usually practiced. It was a very exciting rehearsal process and production for me.

In the winter of 1981, in a laboratory production in Stadium II Theatre, I played Natwick in Pvt. Wars, in a performance that incited much laughter from the audiences. The character was perfectly suited to my "type," the ego-filled, pretentious snob from the upper class. Because the character could so easily be played by me, I again cut corners in my work, as I had done with Jack Worthing in Earnest. The lazy attitude was evident more in the inner life of the character than in the technically-oriented areas of voice and physical presentation. I never became one with the character, living Natwick's life on stage; I rather "acted," or showed the audience, how Natwick lived. The difference was probably more in my mind than in the audience's perception of the performance, but it is an important difference nonetheless. Although it was vocally and physically competent as a performance, down to the timing of precise business and line readings, I lost a great deal of the underlying honesty of the character that would have made Natwick less of a caricature and more of a real, vulnerable person. I should have trusted my work more, and not been so eager to make sure the audience enjoyed it. Since
then, I have used Natwick many times as an audition piece, and, knowing that it is sure to get the desired laughs, I have been able to relax with it, and let the character evolve subtly and honestly.

The second time I acted in Waiting for Godot, in Stadium II Theatre in the spring of 1981, I was cast as Lucky. In trying not to be critical of the Vladimir, I became almost blinded to anything except my work on my own character. I forced myself to immerse my concentration solely on my own problems of creating the physical and emotional characteristics of Lucky. I became quite aware of using the language given me in vocally interesting ways, and while doing so, to use my voice properly. I worked to establish physical contortions for the character for which I would have to apply myself if they were to be believable. This seclusion from the rest of the rehearsal problems helped me to find the soul of the strange, outcast character. It was, in my estimation, my best work up to that time.

In Indians, as Chief Joseph (in Thurber Theatre, autumn 1981), I had one speech which was repeated twice during the play. I had the luxury of an overabundance of rehearsal time to experiment with the five or six minutes of playing time the character has on stage. As a result, I was quite confident in the role, and emphasized the vocal qualities of the role to my best capabilities. I subtly suggested the infirm Indian's age by little movement except for the bizarre mock sign language he must use in performing the Wild West Show of which he is a part. It was an enjoyable, if not substantial, role.

Matt Friedman, in Talley's Folly (West Campus Studio Theatre, autumn 1981) was a character that in its nature seemed close to my own. Many people pointed this out to me when I was cast in the role. Until then, I had not particularly noticed any similarity between the two. As I worked on the play, I realized any external similarity was not in question. We did, however, share a like attitude of life: covering over problems with a casual, humorous gloss. Realizing this, and further, knowing people would expect to see a great display of vulnerability as that gloss was stripped away during the course of the play, made it much more difficult to open myself to that sort of emotional release. Rather than working to find emotional ties with the character, as I did with Harold McCollough, I looked for differences in myself and Matt. As I found more of these and could distance my personal feelings from those of Matt, it was easier to open up and trust the events of the play. Eventually I found a diverse series of balances between the character and myself, which let me put more of myself on stage than ever I had before. I was allowing myself to be exposed with the character. Breaking that personal barrier made possible a more honest, rich, and multilayered portrayal. I am proudest of my work on Matt, and it is the part I would most like to repeat. The ease of performing the role, and the broad range of emotions displayed in this work carried me through it as if I were not
acting the play, but living life as someone else. This kind of strong bond with a character was something I had been trying to achieve through the years' work here.

*Tartuffe*, then, followed three very successful parts for me: those of Lucky, Chief Joseph, and Matt Friedman. I was confident I could continue the growth I had shown in those particular instances. Though I knew there were certainly going to be added difficulties in doing a period play in verse, my approach to *Tartuffe* was not very different from the method I developed in the other plays. Yet, since *Tartuffe* was a very different script, there were bound to be differences in the process. I shall look at the similarities and differences of my acting process for *Tartuffe* in the following chapters.

The rehearsal process that the director, Byron Ringland, and I followed was an extremely free one. Mr. Ringland and I had worked together in his acting studio for two years, and he was well aware of how my personality and my independence affected the way I work. In addition, much of my acting and rehearsal process techniques (which are discussed in Chapter Four) were acquired under Mr. Ringland’s training. Both he and I were comfortable with the manner in which we conducted rehearsals. At the outset, I was allowed the freedom to move anywhere and try anything in the scenes. There were no restrictions whatsoever. Gradually, as I began to set certain pieces of business, the director began to put particular restrictions on a scene. He would limit my movement to a certain area of the stage. He would only permit me to sit on certain pieces of furniture. In effect, he let me block and create my own performance, with little criticism. He stepped in late in the rehearsal process, and set the business with which I was comfortable, changing some of it for better visual impact. At this late point, too, we had many discussions about the characterization that I had developed, and what he thought the positive and negative elements of it were. He suggested facets of the character that I had avoided considering. This freedom to explore and create without a heavy guidance was extraordinarily generous on the director’s part. I appreciated the confidence he had in my work. The rehearsal process was structured in such a way that it demanded that I supply my technical facilities and personal process in developing a role to the best of my abilities. The success or failure in the various areas of my performance rested squarely with my execution of my training.

I have separated my work into four categories: vocal aspects, physical considerations, specific problems of the role of *Tartuffe* and acting process. Each general category contains sundry problems to conquer and specifics to establish before these small elements, brush strokes in a sense, can take part in a whole, finished picture, or performance. Ideally, there should be no indication that these elements stand on their own in the finished product or performance.
Instead, they should flow naturally into the character, becoming the stamp of that character, in this instance, Tartuffe. Moreover, the work and refining that goes into harnessing these techniques to the specific character should not be noticeable to the audience; they should believe they are watching a person with these idiosyncracies. It should be noted that in separating these areas for discussion, I do so only for clarity. In practice, I do not bear on one section at a time, but develop each technique toward a final ideal. Ultimately, the four areas meld into one polished product at the same time, the distinctions of one technique become lost in the character's life, and the work in one area naturally enhances and shores up the progress in another.
CHAPTER I

VOCAL ASPECTS

The Richard Wilbur translation of Molière's Tartuffe from the original French to idiomatic modern English maintained the original formal style of rhyming couplets presented in iambic pentameter. This imposed order of the language exerted its influence on all the production aspects in terms of style, but was most prevailing in terms of the production's acting. The success in choosing solutions to the handling of the verse language was vital both to the production and to my own performance. The use of the language became, in fact, the core of my work, and the basis for a sturdy characterization.

In performance, the language became my greatest tool in moving through the play. My proficiency or inability to deal with the words on any given evening would directly affect the quality of that performance. Tartuffe demanded that the language be presented with an aural sumptuousness, the presence of which became a gauge that indicated whether or not I was tuned in to my work. I learned that in solving the problems of the verse, I had to make each individual word live, in order to make my part live, or both the character and his words quickly died away. Rehearsals for Tartuffe began with over a week's time spent on concentrating only on the text. The cast explored the words of the text for sound, meaning, and communication possibilities with fellow actors. The first hurdle in bringing Tartuffe to the stage was familiarizing ourselves with the problems of a verse play.

The Wilbur translation presented problems germane to all verse plays, in addition to preserving the difficulties inherent in the structure of rhyming couplets. In performing the lines, a balance was accorded between speaking the verse deftly, giving the imposed rhyme scheme of the lines its due, and maintaining an ease with the verse structure so that the formal language is naturally embodied in the character.

Despite its style, the text is not difficult to understand. It is succinct in development of ideas and is not lengthy in running time or in lines. In short, it is sparsely, breezily written. Yet, it is this seeming fragile crispness of the language that is a trap for actors. A major problem in using this translation is that the airiness

1Jean Baptiste Poquelin de Molière, Tartuffe, translated into English verse by Richard Wilbur (New York, Harvest/Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1961). All references to specific sections of the translation will be indicated in the text.
of the language must be maintained. The actor must not allow himself
to be leaden and plodding with the words. He must keep ahead of the
speech, using the language, manipulating it, making the words work for
him. If the actor stops "dancing" with the words, the performance
becomes heavy and labored, the gossamer fabric of the lines gives
way, and the life in the play falls flat. One of the primary tasks
in handling this particular translation of Tartuffe is finding ways to
keep the script, and consequently the performance, alive.

The first step toward progress was to give myself over to the
world Moliere created. This led me to rely on the vast resources that
can be found in the play. Richard Wilbur advises in his note to the
translation (p. v), to "trust the words" to be entertaining and to
convey the essences of the character. Moliere's knowledge and love
of acting prompted him to include in his text everything the actor
would require to bring his script to life. His lines indicate what
the actors should do, what they think, what they feel, and what they
want. There is no need for the actor to delve into odd subtextual
objectives—the character's motivations are presented boldly on the
surface by the lines. My confidence in Moliere's expertise and
knowledge of the stage and acting brought about a similar belief in
trusting the language of the play to sustain me and work for me.

In addition to trusting the text and its ideas, I soon realized
I had to trust the imposed rhythms and pacing of each scene as the play
progressed. Moliere, in writing in a set meter and form, put limits
and controls on how the play would sound. This translation differs
from a prose translation in that it more closely assimilates the
rhythmic qualities of Moliere's French. Through the meter and rhyme
schemes, Moliere governs the way his play is to be presented. Although
character clues would be similar in both a prose and verse translation,
only the verse lends itself to the specific guidelines and perimeters
which Moliere wrote, and intended to be present in production.

The formal framework of the language will not permit the chang-
ing of word order in a line, or the insertion of naturalistic adlibbs
and pauses. The tendency of the verse is to initiate and maintain a
drive to the play. The tempo, rhythm, and rhyme subconsciously capture
the ear and mind in the current of the lines. This surging forward
may take the pace of a teasing stroll, or of a fast run, but this too
is indicated by Moliere's lines. Spurring the play on in this manner
was one of the first tasks we conquered as a cast, and after a few
readings of the play, the lines burst forward with a great amount of
energy that was almost dizzying to listen to and to perform. The
script will not allow an actor to be slack or slow in handling the
verse. Going along with the imposed pacing of the scene does not lead
to artificiality, but instead to a realistic urgency that puts one
character's desires against another's. In this excerpt from the play
in Act Three, note how the dialogue volleys continually back and
forth, yet still holds on to a precision of rhythm. The lines seem
to tease the ear to find the rhyming words. If the pacing is broken
by a pause, or slow cue pick-ups, it jars the scene momentarily, because we realize the best of the line has been diverted.

TARTUFFE
Load me with all the names men most abhor;
I'll not complain; I've earned them all, and more;
I'll kneel here while you pour them on my head
As a just punishment for the life I've led.

ORGON (to Tartuffe)
This is too much, dear Brother.
(to Damis)
Have you no heart?

DAMIS
Are you so hoodwinked by this rascal's art...?

ORGON
Be still, you monster.
(to Tartuffe)
Brother, I Pray you rise.
(to Damis)
Villain!

DAMIS
But...

ORGON
Silence!

DAMIS
Can't you realize...?

ORGON
Just one word more and I'll tear you limb from limb.

TARTUFFE
In God's name, Brother, don't be harsh with him.
I'd rather far be tortured at the stake
Than see him bear one scratch for my poor sake.

ORGON (to Damis)
Ingrate!

TARTUFFE
If I must beg you on bended knee,
To Pardon him...

ORGON
Such goodness cannot be!
(to Damis)
Now, there's true charity!

DAMIS
What, you...?

ORGON Villain, be still!

(pp. 98-100)

Molière's longer speeches in the play similarly volley back and forth, and in doing so, build and subside with subtle shadings of idea. Molière uses great care in devising his arguments so that both the individual speeches and the dialogue between characters mount in complexity while the characters wrangle with the logic of the situations. Even as one character establishes an idea, an opposing viewpoint is being readied by another character, intensifying the scenes to continually greater peaks. The non-speaking actor on the stage can be poised and ready to spring in with his lines, secure in the knowledge that Molière's framing of the language in the scene is carrying a great deal of the burden of making the play entertaining and engaging. A brief example from the Tartuffe/Elmire scene in Act Four follows.

ELMIRE
Can it be right to press me with such force,
Give me no quarter, show me no remorse,
And take advantage, by your stern insistence,
Of the fond feelings which weaken my resistance?

TARTUFFE
Well, if you look with favor upon my love,
Why, then, begrudge me some clear proof thereof?

ELMIRE
But how can I consent without offense
To Heaven, toward which you feel such reverence?

TARTUFFE
If Heaven is all that holds you back, don't worry.
I can remove that hindrance in a hurry.
Nothing of that sort need obstruct our path.

ELMIRE
Must one not be afraid of Heaven's wrath?

TARTUFFE
Madam, forget such fears, and be my pupil,
And I shall teach you how to conquer scruple.
Some joys, it's true, are wrong in Heaven's eyes;
Yet Heaven is not averse to compromise;
There is a science, lately formulated,
Whereby one's conscience may be liberated,  
And any wrongful act you care to mention  
May be redeemed by purity of intention.  
I'll teach you, Madam, the secrets of that science;  
Meanwhile, just place on me your full reliance,  
Assurage my keen desires and feel no dread;  
The sin, if any, shall be on my head.  

(pp. 125-126)

The starting point for making Tartuffe and the language of the play live resided in trusting the words to convey character, thought, motivation, and by becoming comfortable in the imposed formal structure of the verse, with its rhyme scheme and distinct rhythmical patterns. However, the characters in Tartuffe are required to move and go about daily business, the actors cannot sit still and recite the play. The next consideration became allowing the text to continue to be the primary focus of the play, while not sacrificing any of the physical humor that is so closely associated with Tartuffe and other plays shaped by the commedia arte tradition. It became a matter of supporting, balancing, and complementing the text with its physical staging.

The brisk, driving pattern the language takes derived from Moliere's experience with commedia. In approaching commedia technique with James Tompkins, movement instructor at Ohio State during 1979 and 1980, I realized the way to make commedia pieces work was to keep them moving forward toward a goal. There is an almost manic compulsion to get things done in the commedia, which is at the very soul of Tartuffe's psyche. In the commedia, the improvised dialogue reflected the drives and desires of the characters, allowing them to be brash and forthright in getting what they wanted. The physical situations likewise grew out of these relentless passions. The physical and verbal in commedia, then, are closely correlated.

I searched for the similar correlation of the two in Tartuffe. During the first week or so of rehearsal, once preliminary blocking was completed, I experimented with a broad, almost slapstick style of playing that I had used in commedia class. I tried physical attitudes and physically relating to people in very direct ways, letting few obstacles stand in my way. The final effect bordered on the rampant and riotous. I found myself, for instance, grappling with members of the family and continuously pawning Elmire. Trusting the language disappeared. I was, in effect, attempting to replace the words with physical actions, rather than using the physical actions to support the words. The excessive movement was diminishing the power of the lines. Such broad physical playing was not homogeneous with the formal language of the text, nor with the director's choice of production style. In Tartuffe we were striving for realism. The burlesque manner of playing that I had assumed was outside the world we were trying to create. While it was acceptable in commedia class,
where I wore comic masks that demanded larger, more caricaturish playing, in the more realistic climate of our production, I had to tone down my physical choices to a level that would be accepted by the language. Moliere's text and intrinsic structure were the overriding qualifiers.

There was a similar problem in finding the proper vocal approach. The broad, comic, commedia approach intent on garnering laughs would not work with the nature of this production. I realized I was not communicating the lines, but, instead, trying to make each line a punch line to a clever gag set-up. I was more announcing the lines for the audience, so that they might appreciate their glibness, than speaking them to another person on stage. I also was taking my approach out of the context of the play. For instance, I used a southern Baptist preacher's style of speech in one rehearsal, and at other times I hit unflattering words with a harsh Bostonian nasality. I found that the language did not accept elements outside its structure.

The language did not always remain the sole unchangeable influence on the scene, however. There were moments in staging the play when the physical activity in which I was engaged or the pose in which I placed myself led me to expand the constitution of the language. Dynamic pictorial staging often took precedence over the constraints of the verse, and in order to make the staging reasonable in the world we were presenting, the strict formality of the language was compromised. Still, the final goal was to provide complimentary physical and vocal presences in these moments.

An example of this occurred in the staging of the scene reprinted on page four. During this interaction, Tartuffe had Elmire pinned to the prie-dieu, straddling both her and the furniture in an uncouth position, as if trying to mount her. For a while, my vocal work through this section was coy and playful, and the physical position did not seem keyed in to the scene. It was phony and illogical that I would be in such a position. In order to make the pose logical, the moment needed a more rapid, intense urgency. I found it was more appropriate to let off a torrent of steaming ideas to her, not necessarily in a booming voice, but rather in a compressed, hissing manner. I played the many "s" consonant sounds in the speech. The compression of sounds established the quality of a great force being held back, now in check, but capable of exploding at any moment. It was a fine solution to keeping the physical force contained for the long moment, as well.

In another moment from the play, I went into a trance-like state while playing the virginal for Elmire. Starting, and coming back to reality, I tossed my legs on top of the instrument, and relaxed back, feigning tremendous casualness. I took the pose the extra needed step with my vocal work on the line that followed: "With me, of course, there need be no anxiety..." (p. 91) I oozed with a nonchalance and indifference that I tossed away. The more I underplayed the line, the
more it contrasted with what the audience had just seen: in point, Tartuffe sweating over Elmire's beauty, and convulsing in a spasmodic seizure at the keyboard. The more casual the beats following the seizure were, and the more unassuming the physical and vocal approaches were to try to convey that carefree air, the more Tartuffe became a liar trying to sweet-talk Elmire.

Finding the correlation of the physical and the vocal led me to the primary focus of my vocal work, that of creating a naturalistic and real person who speaks verse in a formal structure, yet who is believable in the delivery of lines. Although the constraints of the playwright and the physical set patterns of business and blocking in the production impose limits on the behavior, realistic behavior must underscore and indeed be at the heart of technical considerations.

The vocal work in the production, then, must resemble the vocal patterns and delivery of everyday speech. The techniques used must bring about a natural, realistic quality. This approach to the verse is indicated by Moliere and his acting troupe. In working with his company of actors for whom he wrote Tartuffe, Moliere constantly impressed upon them the importance of delivering lines in a natural manner. He developed a system of notation to aid them in this craft. In his play L'Impromptu de Versailles (1663), he mocked the bombastic, florid style of other actors of his time. Constant-Benoît Coquelin (1841-1909), the great actor of Moliere, also sought realism in creating a character form Moliere's texts. He desired to create a new person when he was acting, especially through use of the voice: "Your character should be drawn and portrayed so that even the blind may see him by your articulation, your delivery, and your intonation."

In setting out to create a natural vocal presence, I began with the thought that Tartuffe was a person of excess and exaggeration. I decided I would give myself the freedom to embellish my vowel sounds and consonants. I realized at our first reading of the script that the rest of the cast was being very conservative and contained with their readings. In order to set myself apart from the family, and to make Tartuffe more showy and pretentious, I began rolling my "r"s whenever I could. Later, I would indulge in other consonant explorations, and find other consonants that could be held, or played, for sundry effects. "Playing" consonants is a term coined by Arthur Lessac, and involves getting the maximum sound and effect from individual consonant sounds, through free explorations of their unique properties of sound. Lessac compares each consonant sound to an instrument of the symphony orchestra to encourage playing the

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3Constant-benoît Coquelin, "The Dual Personality of the Actor," in Actors on Acting, p. 196.
consonants for a variety of pitches, durations, and timbres. The Lessac speech method will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter.

Continuing with my search for a natural vocal presence, I decided to investigate the possibilities of using a very rich, resonant voice, one that seemed to be on the brink of intoning hymns, one full of strength and piety. I had several images in mind. First, I imagined the voice of a pastor who seems to enjoy his own sound. I was trying to assimilate the voice of a professional preacher such as Oral Roberts, or Billy Graham and Jerry Falwell. These men make a living by swaying others with their words and vocal impressions. Their voices command attention, by becoming ominous with condemnation or by angelically speaking of humility and redemption. In any event, they have a great confidence in the power of their vocal approach, and are aware that their listeners are caught up, rapt. Other images I had thought of as starting points were from the realm of opera. In Giuseppe Verdi's Rigoletto, the title character is cursed by an elderly man, Monterone, being led to prison. Monterone's curse is sustained and full of vengeance; it dominates everyone on stage. I made a connection between it and Tartuffe's curse on the household in Act Four. Another image from opera comes from Tosca, by Giacomo Puccini. In Tosca, Scarpia, the villain, proclaims his evil amidst a chorus of young choir boys in prayer. The counterpoint of the two forces and their vocal differences I related directly to Tartuffe's villainy amidst the piety of the home.

The images helped me toward establishing the vocal range of Tartuffe as a real person. Tartuffe's character had points in common with the images, in that he would curse the family and was decidedly evil in the face of his mock piety. The images led me to a rate of utterance that was slower than my own. The tempo was slowed not so much by pauses as by elongation of sounds. Having this slower pace at my command gave me a good deal more variety in the role, rather than whisking through the text at a constant rhythm. It also gave my character an added point of departure from the vocal work of the rest of the cast.

Yet, this groundwork did cause problems with my vocal renderings until I learned to be freer with my voice and not to be shackled by the images I had given myself. The problems stemmed from the fact that I was being general with the language in meaning, sound, and intent. Everything sounded the same. I was not enunciating my consonants, and words could not be understood. I was losing the idea and thought process of Tartuffe by making words take on a certain attitude that rarely changed; to the point, I was not being specific. The monotony of my line readings lacked interest. I was receiving notes from the director and vocal coach to the effect that "You are singing that passage; these lines sound as if you were droning." I was not communicating the points clearly, which should have been my
primary task. I was trying to color the idea before it had been enunciated and focussed for the audience.

Another problem that I was engulfed in was directly caused by the rhyming couplets of the verse. I was not reading them as dialogue of a human being, I was reading them as poetry, falling into a rhythm pattern generated by the bounce and scanion of the iambic pentameter form. Casually reading the lines is almost certain to bring about a singsong, monotonous pattern that soon loses any importance with which it may have started. Add to this the problem of each line ending with a rhyme, and my instinct was to fall into a trap of pulsing along the rhythm of the line and emphasizing the final rhyming word. The end result was unnatural and ridiculous.

To combat these problems, I developed a number of exercises or check points that I could go through in rehearsal and in performance to prevent me from becoming trapped by the verse. Some of these were excellent tools to use in performance. Although it is not wise for an actor to go through a play listening to himself, as it makes him self-conscious and restricts his spontaneous impulses, I found myself aware of my vocal rhythms and redundant inflections. When I realized that I was evaluating myself mid-performance and in rehearsals, it made things worse, and the language became more leaden. I was going through the play as an actor in a programmed, predetermined performance, rather than as a character going about solving specific problems, saying things for a purpose at that moment in time. The lack of vocal life at these times was evidence that I was not concentrating on character objectives.

I gave myself points of concentration, specific endeavors with which I could challenge myself and accomplish through use of the language. By working to complete a task through use of the language, it opened me up to explore then words I had to say in new ways. When I realize that I am trapped into a vocal pattern I commit myself to breaking free of it by using one of the games or exercises, and by trying to do something vocally new at the moment I realize I am trapped. I have learned not to dwell on the fact that I am acting poorly when it happens, but to instantly seek for a means to get my mind off that fact and on to a positive approach. The points of concentration are all positive methods of dealing with the language.

The exercises I use are means of communication everyone uses in everyday life without thinking about it. The assimilation of these ways of communication into our vocal styles makes us and our characters different from each other. We have all had needs that we wanted fulfilled and communicated; we have all tried not to be misunderstood; and we have all played with sounds when we talk. The points of concentration are related to these motives; strongly seeking an objective through the language, making a thought clear, seeking the operative word in a phrase, and being specific with a word in order to let it live. I will examine each of these exercises a bit further.
Objectives, which will be discussed at greater length in the acting process chapter, are simply the achievements the actor wishes to accomplish during a moment or scene. The first exercise is totally committing myself to what I want, and totally committing myself to using the words and sounds the author or poet has given me to finally obtain that objective. I force myself to delve into the language and use and shape my words to work along with me in the task with which I am involved. The language will help me complete the given task, thereby fulfilling my objective. It helps me to use the words while acting toward an objective to pretend or imagine that I have no other means of contact with the people on stage other than the sounds of my words. I do not allow myself to use any physical resources, only sounds. I must get what I want only by use of sound. If I expect to incite other people on stage to taking some sort of action, I must move them by sound, whether it be forceful or charming. The exercise gets me absorbed in both a positive action and full use of the language.

Similarly the second technique I use—especially early in rehearsals or when I have been told by someone that they cannot follow me in the play—is the idea that I must make my thoughts crystal clear to the other person. I pretend the other character is a simpleton who has to have everything spelled out explicitly. This helped me when I was trying to carry an idea through a long monologue in Tartuffe. It also helped to a great extent in Talley's Folly.

In Talley's Folly, the character of Matt has an enormously involved tale about his family being killed in Germany, which continually goes off on tangents. Yet, each tangent is vital to the total story. The woman to whom he tells the story has trouble believing him. The great effort it took to convince her it was true and to make her understand the implications of the story led me to produce tears by the end of the scene. That particular success hinged on the technique of using the language precisely to communicate clearly.

This particular exercise works equally well when the character's intention of meaning is different from what the words are actually saying. Then, interesting inflections evolve that give the script added meaning. I enjoy finding these double meanings in the author's words. Many times when Tartuffe speaks to Elmire, the words are pristine and the thought is filth, allowing the actor to play more than one layer at one time. Probably my favorite line reading in the play however, was my inflection of "God knows what people will think" (p. 110), as Tartuffe tries to tell Cleante that exiling Damis is for the best. I went away from the expected, normal reading of the line as I shifted my inflection from the uncertainty that not even God could possibly know while giving a shrug of the shoulders, to a sanctimonious declaration that God knows all while I wagged a finger in warning. I always try to find the most varied interesting inflection for a line, and then may do away with it, if I find it confuses the author's intention. Still, that search to be different
is important to me. I need to feel that I have explored a line for
different options and not settled for the first choice that comes to
mind. There are, of course, many ways to say the same words, and it's
important to look at these. I may find a new meaning in this manner
that previously had evaded me.

The third exercise toward realistic use of language is one I
use mainly in early rehearsals, when I am not completely understanding
the meaning of a line. I search for the operative words of a phrase,
and emphasize them to make a point. Operative words are those words
which carry the importance of the line—verbs, frequently, but also
descriptive words, words of command, and words that indicate a strong
want of the strong need to communicate a specific thought or emotion.
Finding the operative words in a script helps to communicate that
understanding when saying the lines, and pulls me away from tend-
dencies to fall into the meter and rhyme scheme. Still, I only use
this exercise when I am not communicating ideas. I believe it also
can lead an actor into a mechanical, planned reading of the lines.
I like to explore for new meanings and shadings all through the
rehearsals, and have no trouble with changing line readings during
the run of performances, either. I do not like to be tied down to
saying a line the same way every time. I like the option to venture
new readings.

The fourth system of avoiding patters in speech is a new one to
me that I first tried with Tartuffe, and it worked so well in freeing
me up vocally that I will most certainly make use of it again. It
is simply being as specific with each individual word as possible.
The process includes the "ands" and the "yous" and all the other small
words we tend to gloss over. One advantage of the exercise is that
it makes the actor enunciate the words clearly. Another benefit is
that it allows for endless exploration of the importance of that word
in the line. It also promotes endless variations in how to approach
each word. Granted, in acting a play, an actor usually arrives at
an approach to words that he quite likes and does not change that
approach every night. Still, the author's choice and intent in
using specific words must be respected. If the author included a
word, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, it deserves to
be heard and have its meaning established for the audience. Being
specific is easy to do if you allow yourself to take the time to
commit to that task. Thinking each word, and pinpointing its meaning
in your mind gives it a framework of importance. Each word should
glow for a moment. Each word should be given life, its own unique
life. It should have its own special meaning. We should have a
mind's image of the word which we try to convey in the way the word
is spoken. We can express our emotion toward the word and its assoc-
ations by specifically coloring that particular word with that
emotion.
For the majority of time on stage in performance of Tartuffe, I think I was successful in being specific. However, the lushness of sounds and word images in Tartuffe's two long speeches to Elmire regarding her beauty could easily snare me into playing a generalized feeling. For the most part I was able to avoid that problem. Those times in performance when I did fall into a generalized line reading, I became aware of the fact because my mind, I would realize, had stopped pinpointing the thought of each word. I had stopped thinking about specific word images, and instead was only rattling off the lines to get through the play quickly. At other times I was less specific because I was wondering about how the final effect of the speech was moving the audience. For example the mock "seizure," as I liked to refer to it, on Tartuffe's lines, "If, in your great goodness, you will deign/ To look upon your slave, and ease his pain" (p. 91) was a section that always was a potential problem for me. I dropped to the floor and my breathing became sporadic and difficult, as if in some sort of bizarre fit, and I could easily be led into a generalized line reading. At one instant I was aware of preventing misuse of my vocal instrument due to the drying out of my throat from the forced air. I was also cautious of improperly placing my voice in the back of the throat, straining it in an attempt at a raspy, husky sound. The division in my mind at this moment never permitted me to successfully complete either course of action. This division ended when the sporadic breathing stopped and I crumpled to a heap by the side of the virginal. My concentration then went to the stinging sounds of the consonants, and the buzzing vibration in the voiced consonants, letting the sounds in the words take precedence. This made the words both specific in images and clearly enunciated so as to be heard all over the theatre. Despite the fact that my face was buried in my arms through most of this section, my attention to playing the specific sounds of the words made them audible.

Playing with the language, especially in performance, is both challenging and to some extent risky. It moves one away from safe choices, and adds surprise, vulnerability, and interesting interpretations, all of which make for exciting performances. At the same time, unless an actor can trust himself enough to get new results, he may feel foolish and stilted. I don't think this is a problem for me. I have always admired performers who make interesting, fully committed, effective use of the language, performers who shoot for the unexpected in their approach to it. There is a definite emotional response from me when someone excites me through sound and lets me experience a word in a new way.

I have always been impressed by many of the fine actors of our day in their use of language. Moments from their performances stay with me in my mind's ear and have provided me with excellent examples from which I could learn. Richard Burton's cry of "Ah, vengeance!" in his

4William Shakespeare's Hamlet, Act II, Scene ii, line 647.
recording of Hamlet was primal, a howling for help and a release of pain. It was disturbing to listen to. Equally disquieting, although different in approach, was Christopher Plummer's Iago, in the 1982 Broadway production of Othello. Iago imparts to us that he will "make the net/That shall enmesh them all." On the word "enmesh," Plummer lowered his voice in volume, causing the audience to lean forward attentively, so as not to miss the words. Then, he held the final "sh" sound of the word. The sound seemed to indicate us to be silent if we dared differ with Iago; it created a serpent-like hiss that Iago sprayed at us; and it allowed Iago to enmesh us all in a net of sound as the "sh" filled the theatre and surrounded all of those watching for a moment. The effect, in its several guises, was chilling, and brought an audible gasp from members of the audience. I have also learned a great deal from listening to and watching John Wood. His prowess for making intricate sentences and thought constructions explicit was used to great stead in Travesties. Winding paragraphs of senile digression, limericks, and coined words were presented in a clear manner with amazingly crisp diction. I saw the play four times, and each time, from various locations in the theatre from the third row to the second balcony, I could hear every word and consonant. Much of the enjoyment of John Wood's performance in Travesties was his apparent felicity and joy in speaking the language. These three actors are by no means the only performers who have made evident to me the value of extraordinary vocal work. They are, however, fine artists who challenge the language by interpreting it in vocally exciting ways.

I like vocal interpretations like those I have mentioned which I remember long after the show has closed. I think more and more as I grow in my own vocal work, I have been looking for places in texts to vocally interpret words or lines in ways that will make the audience sit up and notice. This could be a hindrance, I realize, creating an artificial edge. I must remain aware of that possibility and check to see I do not fall into that type of performance. I do not think I should be doing vocal "tricks" just for the sake of tossing something out at the audience. Vocal work should be incorporated into the dramatic moment. In Indiana, for example, I succeeded in this with a prolonged cry that cuts off hanging in the air on the last word of the phrase, "I will fight no more forever." It was an effective choice, since it was the last line of the speech, built to a climax, leaving the audience wanting to hear more. When Tartuffe is finally cornered he fights off capture with the line, "No, I'm the master and you're the one to go!" (p. 130) I used the "n" sound of the "no" to begin a sustained groan that built in pitch and volume before I opened my mouth to let loose the vowel sound of the "o". I was trying for the

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5William Shakespeare's Othello, Act II, Scene iii, line 362.

6Travesties, by Tom Stoppard, played the Colonial Theatre, Boston, Massachusetts in February, 1977, presented by the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.
effect of an animal that snarls before it finally lets loose a cry of warning.

What I have found through my work in Tartuffe is a system of exercises or games which I can use to free myself on the stage, and use my vocal techniques to their full advantage. This freedom and confidence in the vocal aspects will result in convincing, honest portrayals of people with natural vocal presence.

The one part of my training that has proved most instrumental in bringing about proper use of my voice, and freeing myself up to give more than a common, lackadaisical approach to the words was the work I did with Dr. David Ayers in 1981-1982 with the Lessac speech training. This training has as a basis the exploration of words and sounds as we use them in everyday speech. The speaker is encouraged to explore the infinite variety that can be given to consonant and vowel sounds. For the actor, the process allows for an everchanging, total immersion in the language. In addition to making speech more interesting to listen to, the words become enunciated more clearly, as I have noted before. The Lessac method is based on the specifics discussed—those of making each word live and, most importantly, communicate.

Lessac is also specific in two other areas in which I have had problems, but now have made great improvement—the areas of vocal support and focus of the voice. Every voice teacher I have ever had has tried to find the key to getting me to use my voice properly. The Lessac system, for whatever reason, made that connection for me, and I now know how to protect myself from abusing my vocal mechanism. The system Lessac describes is one of breathing from the lower back, and maintaining a constant outward pressure to supply support for the voice. I have carried the Lessac techniques over to my voice lessons in the School of Music, and they have worked quite well in combination with singing training. Lessac also has helped me understand the focus of the speaking voice. Lessac exercises which form the oral structure of the face into a shape likened to an inverted megaphone focus the voice through the bones in the mask. Using the Lessac exercises, I can now properly move the placement of my voice forward and out of my throat. Also, I have developed increased resonance from the greater involvement of my entire facial mask. I can finally feel when my voice is in and out of focus. There is a considerable

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8 Chapter Four of the Lessac text explains the Lessac principles in detail, pp. 24-42.

9 See Lessac Chapter Six on "Structural Action," pp. 56-78.
improvement in the sound of my voice, whether speaking or singing. In both speaking and singing, the proper placement technique has worked for me equally well.

The Lessac applications were extensively used in Tartuffe. There were only one or two instances, after very lengthy rehearsals, when I came away from the show with an abused, tired voice. The training is becoming a part of my natural practice. Although the vocal coach for Tartuffe, Ionia Zelenka, is not trained in the Lessac system, she was content with the results of my practicing that technique. She would give me notes regarding problems with volume, missing consonants, inflections that were monotonous, and instances of being trapped in the language, and I would privately work out solutions using the Lessac techniques. There was frequent difficulty with what Ms. Zelenka calls "a vaulted voice," which amounts to the same thing as an unfocussed voice. These problems, I realized, became most evident when I was not being specific with the language. This diffused "vaulted" voice was brought into focus by my drilling the lines over and over again, making sure they were properly placed. After this technical work, my vocal quality changed from a strident, weak sound and gained a rich, reverberating sound.

The other problem which has plagued me vocally, and which I also made significant progress in correcting, is that of pushing my voice past its limits, by putting too much force behind it. I do not know yet where the physiological limit to my voice is. I do know that I can easily strain myself to hearseness by lack of support and focus, and by applying extreme force to my instrument. For some reason, I feel at times compelled to throw everything I possibly can behind my vocal presentation. This procedure is far too excessive, boring and unwise, and strains the vocal mechanism. Constant loud delivery offers little variety to the listener.

In Tartuffe, chiefly through listening to great actors' vocal work live and on recordings, I have learned that it is far more effective to save those bursts of sound and volume for a few precious times. (The Richard Burton reference used earlier is a fine example. His "Ah, vengeance" was more powerful because of the lower dynamics surrounding it.) It is far more beguiling to use a quiter volume, placing the voice in its rich optimum pitch range, and letting the life of the words do the work for you. All the screaming is not necessary. I am now aware of when I resort to yelling long passages of lines, or phrases, whereas before I tended to use volume to excess much of the time. Now I do it more infrequently, by choice. Still, in the final analysis, I believe I go to that extreme more than I need to.

I developed, in working on Tartuffe, a great respect and enjoyment in making my performance sound as rich as it possibly could.
learned not to shy away from vocal techniques, but to make them a part of the character. In life, a person manipulates his voice and sound to communicate and persuade. An actor can manipulate his rhythm, pitch, timbre, phrasing, dynamics, inflections, and use every vowel and consonant sound to establish a system of speaking that works for his character, while being believable and natural. The words can be shaped to suit the character; the character should not be victim of the words.
CHAPTER II

PHYSICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In approaching the physical considerations of Tartuffe I knew that I would follow the same pattern of evolving the character that I had established for myself through the rehearsal processes of other plays. This pattern can loosely be defined as one going from the wildly general and excessive to one of specific control over how and why I move on the stage. I knew, too, that in Tartuffe I wanted to accomplish a number of goals: first, to create a unique, interesting physical type whose movement was fascinating to watch; second, to totally involve my entire body in the characterization; third, to physically relax on stage, and fourth, to produce as economical and specific a performance as I could.

One of the first aspects I establish when creating a character is the character's physical being. My main reason for doing this is to create a psychological distance in my mind from performing as myself, in my own body, to behaving as another, different person. In separating my own physical characteristics, idiosyncrasies, and carriage, from that which I create for the character, I establish in my mind a definite division between myself and the new person who is to be closely scrutinized on stage. This division between the two is, in part, a security measure that I set up for myself. By this division, a psychological barrier is established for me that allows me to be freer, less self-conscious, and more apt to take risks in the acting of the role. I take the view that people are evaluating and critiquing the character, and not me. Similarity I may easily do things as the character that I would censor myself from doing in real life. I can enjoy the process of becoming someone new, rather than freezing with fear suspecting the audience, or my fellow artists, are maliciously analyzing who I am as a human being.

Along with this sense of security and the ensuing freedom in performing, I basically see it as my job to create a new physical presence, rather than just "being myself." I try to find and perfect the characteristics and physical oddities of the man I am portraying. Unless I go through the process of rearranging myself by moving in the manner of the person in the script, I get a suspicious dishonest feeling that I'm not totally involved with the project, and I am not doing my work or being truly creative. In sum, I firmly maintain the attitude that no one wants to see me on stage, they want to see my character. One of the things which I especially like about acting is the ability to move away from oneself. As an actor, I insist on suit- ing myself to the role, not vice versa.
Once I start finding physical poses and the way the character moves, I begin to get a certain rhythm and viewpoint on how the character goes about doing things, both emotionally and mentally. I usually get certain images and feelings for a role soon after I have read the play. These sometimes come as clear, defined, recognizable images, and at other times they are abstract. Only by moving about do I eventually arrive at something that makes a connection between my mind and emotions with the vagueries of the images. The movement "feels" right. Tartuffe's movement began in such an abstract fashion.

During the first few rehearsals when I am moving about, I explore different stances, walks, and ways to go through activities as the character. These rehearsals are usually concerned only with blocking and other staging considerations of the director, and there is little pressure on me to perform or become emotionally involved. I can therefore feel free to try physical alternatives without slowing up progress on the production. The process is purely improvisational and casual, nothing is preplanned by me. I try to see if I can arrive at a possible form for the images with which I began. I concentrate only on letting movement happen as it may, organically coming from within to some external manifestation. This organic reaction is intuitive, and some of the responses are a primary emphasis in making the character alive and unique. I play with body attitudes that complement the text, and concentrate, in turn, on each section of my body to see what it can convey during the scene, and how it can go about doing it. I find myself, over a period of time, keeping certain physical postures and attitudes and using them as a springboard for further exploration. The few things I find, consider, and decide fit the image and the feel that I had in mind become a motif for the rest of my work. Gestures that don't fit in, or feel awkward in terms of the character and situation disappear quickly. After roughly two weeks (in a lengthy rehearsal process) I start to look closely at what has materialized from this free playing with the character's movement.

It is at this point that I look at how the character's body is put together, along with the limitations it must have, and if the body is too like something I have done before in another role. I hate to repeat things that I have done before, even if they were successful. It is a challenge to see how versatile I can be. Also, each character stays more specific for me because I am portraying certain planned particular characteristics that only belong to that one person. Still, types of moves are bound to be repeated. We can never totally change ourselves. However, by forcing myself to create new character movement each time, my growth, ability to take risks, and range are extended. The first major adjustment I make is in the way I stand and how I walk. I take a close look at the spine of the character and see how the body elements should physiologically fall into place. The spine is the framework for our bodies, and its alignment creates the impression or silhouette our physiques make. In designing the
spine of my character, I consider the character's state of mind, work habits, class, and other psychological data that have an effect on how the person moves. For instance, does the character slump forward, slouch, hyperextend his back or derrier, tilt his pelvis, cock a side of his body forward when he walks, or splay his feet to stand up straight? The spine is also important in showing a person's age or vitality. In aging a character, I take each muscle group in turn, and decide how much use it still has. Muscles that are still used and stretched are more supple. Smaller, lesser used muscles tend to be less flexible and atrophied. A man's ankle, wrist, and fingers may be a bit tight and stiff in middle age. As he ages, his knee joints and shoulders may atrophy, and so forth. I go over the entire body and decide what functions the individual muscle groups can still perform and to what degree.

After about two weeks of the Tartuffe rehearsal process, I had organized the main elements of my physical portrayal. I knew I wanted to maintain a posed look throughout, to suggest the Vermeer concept of the show. I also hoped to make Tartuffe come off as a trifle arch, and planned, as if he had trained and drilled himself to pose elegantly. In terms of my spine, I kept my breastbone high and slightly back, producing a curved line that sent forward as it followed down my back through to the legs. From the front, I appeared to have a slight convexity. This langulid curve shows up over and over again in portraits of people during this time period, posed in a formal setting. It is a way of presenting the body so that it appears at its best.

In addition to the previously discussed abstract images, I began movement exploration thinking of certain descriptive words, with the intention of reflecting their qualities in my motion. These words included poise, dignity, conceit, vanity, flair, intelligence, playfulness, superiority, unctuousness, and slyness. Once I began actively going through the play in the manner of Tartuffe, I found that my pace, flow, and rhythm were responding in terms of these qualities. In other words, my movement was such that if someone described it, they might very likely say that it was "posed" or showed "slickness." I had started the habit of keeping one toe pointed to the ground whenever I was still, much like a pointer spotting his pheasant, or a cat readying itself to pounce. This kept me in a state of perpetual movement within myself, for even though I was stationary, my kinetic energy was never settling, but ready to move again. It also gave the impression that I never fully stopped moving, I was always coiled to spring. The pointed foot would either drag behind just a bit, finishing off the line of the body, or it would touch ahead of me, as if displaying the ankle and calf for examination. In either case, there was no weight on that respective leg, if held for a pause, as if I had stopped mid-step. I followed through with the never-settling lightness in the manner I chose to sit, as if on a perch, keeping as little of me on the seat as possible. The same approach was used in touching things. I would caress an object,
letting my tactile sense respond to it, before my hand flitted away. My hand never rested heavy and unmoving on an object.

I added to this the idea that two elements of my body must be in opposition at all times. Artists frequently use opposition in painting the human figure. It adds dynamic energy to the representation, as isometric tension holds the body's forces in check. I used this idea in conjunction with my process. It added to the feel I was attempting to create, that of a strong force holding back, but ready to propel at any moment. The tension in the body picture supported this. My first thoughts on the subject were supported by many pictures, paintings, sketches and has reliefs that I studied, and by knowledge of the Delsarte technique of acting, both of which will be discussed at greater length below. The opposition took form in a variety of ways, but for an example, if my body and torso faced one way, I turned my head and looked the other. If I leaned forward, a leg and arm countered back, as if clearing a safe escape route. I tried to incorporate such opposition as frequently as the director's staging would permit. The movement, up to this point in the process, was organically, internally motivated and freely rendered into an external, physical form. Although I am now trying to describe and justify it, at the time in rehearsals and production it simply seemed to be correct, and an interesting choice to perfect. Fortunately, as I further researched the role, I found additional proof that my intuition had led me wisely.

From the first, I knew that I was going to concentrate on using my entire body to create a character and reflect his psychological underpinnings. I have always been aware of what was going on in all sections of my body in other plays, yet, in retrospect, I do not think I was as specific as I could have been in what I was going; rather, I let myself move in generalizations. After seeing the Broadway production of Amadeus in 1981, I was mesmerized by how both Ian McKellan and Tim Curry used their legs and feet to create character and reveal different aspects of their character and emotion. Such skill made them able to show various levels of thought at the same time as well as keeping them constantly and totally absorbed on stage. I found myself, during the course of the play, shifting my focus to look and see what their feet and legs were telling me about the situation. I thought a great deal about that production, and realized that I had not been using my total instrument to the greatest extent. In Tartuffe, I committed myself to doing that, and the rewards from it were great. During rehearsals I would mentally stop myself and take an imaginary photograph of my image, and consider what all my limbs and body parts were communicating about the situation. In some rehearsals, I would place my attention on no more than one area—the arms for instance, I would find out what I could say with my arms to the others on stage. In this manner, I worked through the entire play knowing what I was doing at every point. Next followed the technical chore of repeating the movements I had found until they became habitual. By getting the
physicality of Tartuffe ingrained in me, I could then be secure in trying new things later in the rehearsal process and in performance. I would have a solid framework to which I could return. Once I had made the new types of gestures and moves my own, I could relax even more into my character's poses, and not be so blatant and heavy handed with the fact that I was doing something new. I could subtly suggest the patterns I wished the audience to see, knowing I was totally involved with my physical being. A confidence in my stage presence grew from the fact that I knew what every part of my body was going to do. This confidence, in turn, produced a great relaxation and self assurance in me, and I was unburdened and able to turn my concentration to other aspects of the role during production.

In the area of relaxation, my personal growth can be readily seen if one compares my stage appearance in Gold Dust with that of Tartuffe. In the latter, I no longer have the tense, raised shoulders, tight knees and arms, and stiff neck of the former. I have physically relaxed due to a number of factors. First, exercises and stretches that I have gone through in movement classes and privately through the three years here have minimized tensions in my body. Second, I have an increased confidence in my work as an actor, and am much more at home with an audience and their evaluating of me. Third, I can now remove restrictions that I impose on myself by increased concentration on aspects that get me to forget Strzempek the actor and bring about behavior as the character. Now, if unwanted tensions reoccur, I begin to sense them, and to think them away, so that, in fact, the tensions melt from my shoulders, back and forehead. My ability to learn to recognize these situations and to correct them is one of the most valuable lessons I have learned at Ohio State. It has enabled me to become an actor who can willingly relax and give himself over to his work openly.

Training in stage movement with James Tompkins during 1979 to 1981, brought about this relaxation and other benefits for me in performing. The class covered a variety a stylistic movement, combined with exercises to stretch, relax, and build control in our body. The styles included neutral, expressive, and character mask work, mime, pantomime blanche, stage combat, gymnastics, juggling, and clown and Italian commedia technique. Mr. Tompkins based his training sequence and approach on the Le Coq technique. His work in clown technique stressed playing up both my own strengths and weaknesses as a performer to my own advantage. Although it was a very uncomfortable experience at first, eventually that group of actors in Tompkins class who bared their insecurities and progressed in the technique learned to turn their own vulnerabilities to their advantage. The exercises produced some very open and honest work in the class, and I am sure much of that has carried over in my performances. A certain amount of trusting and security came from realizing the willingness to risk failure, and the complete commitment to the work of the moment yielded success, frequently. I learned that I could
allow myself to be vulnerable and could take chances not knowing what
the consequences would be. The result of taking these risks was
frequently work of an exciting caliber. The clown class and work in
commedia techniques freed me to do bigger things as far as physical
gestures and movements are concerned, and also rid me of any self
consciousness I had over my body.

The commedia techniques were directly applicable to Tartuffe
despite the fact that our production was not taking the Italian commedia
dell'arte approach with which Moliere was familiar. Tartuffe did
include, though, a great deal of physical activity, some of it quite
broad. The production was also full of comic business, known as
lazzi in the commedia, such as dumping a chalice of holy water on
Dorine, entering with a large wooden crucifix, and offering Orgon
hammer and nails with which he could crucify me. Body positions in
the production were frequently comically contrived and grotesque,
playing for laughter through physically oriented humor. Examples of
this are Tartuffe's straddling Elmire at the prie-dieu, sliding across
the floor on my knees to kiss Orgon's feet, collapsing into a mock
Pieta pose in Orgon's arms while feigning a stroke, and cornering Elmire
by splaying a leg across the table. All these moments could easily
be exaggerated or pushed too far to make them burlesque and unreal.
(Perhaps to some in the audience they were.) If underplayed, almost
tossed off without realizing the position the character had gotten
himself into, the business becomes character motivated, and produces
laughter at how far Tartuffe will go. Commedia movement was directly
tied to the motivations of the character. The character's movement was
directly produced from his intellect, emotions, and desires, as was
Tartuffe's. In the process of getting fulfillment for some strong
need, the characters get into ungainly physical situations, or move in
strange fashions which make us laugh. In the commedia class and
Tartuffe, it was necessary to present offbeat, visually exciting body
positions. The key to playing such farcical attitudes is to make them
part of the character's objective, and not obvious sight gags for the
audience's pleasure. The physicalities emerge from the ensuing action.
If something is funny in itself, to bring that idea forward cleanly,
briskly, and honestly is all that is needed. The lazzì will do the
work for you. Thus, in Act Four, when Tartuffe enters with his
scourge while ravishing Elmire, the idea was so deliciously naughty
that merely casually presenting the whip to Elmire produced a great
amount of laughter nightly. Comedy, I learned through clown technique
and commedia class, is a matter of taking discretion to its utmost
limit; but one must realize that the boundary of discretion must never
be crossed.

What this clean, honest approach to comedy boils down to is
economy. Even the elaborate and hasty business must be done with a
keen regard to keeping the production of the final comic effect limited
to only the simple, essential moves. Although that sounds like a
disagreement of terms, it is not. It is a difficult process of presenting the character's motivations in physical business cleanly and honestly. This is one area in which I am trying to work more successfully. I tend to push business so the audience will not miss the amusement of it all. I have a need to try to go as broad as possible sometimes, to almost burst the seams of an idea. This is opposed by the knowledge that I must commit and believe in what I have chosen to do in order to keep it honest. Despite the enjoyment I have in pretending otherwise, I do not like to create "schtick," but business that evolves from the unique character. I now firmly believe the maxim that in the theatre "less is more," meaning, of course, to strive for the essence of thought and emotion. My focus in the future will be to more fully incorporate that economical ideal in my work.

I do, however, feel that despite how busy some aspects and sections of this Tartuffe production were, that the end result for me was the most economical performance that I have ever given. During the final rehearsals, I put heavy emphasis on taking out meaningless gestures, and committed myself totally to all the physical tasks I had. I tried to condense everything down, to do less. I always want to do so much on stage, while in real life I react and go about things very simply and take the easiest, least taxing, direct route. I believe I found that route in this play. I harnessed my energy rather than wasting it or dissipating it in unimportant directions. At the end of each evening's work, I was satisfied that I had given everything I could to my work, yet I still felt invigorated to do more. The difference was that I had not wasted my energy on stage, but had put it to use shrewdly. For me, this was an important breakthrough. I hope my Tartuffe was perceived as being excessive in quality, but not in quantity. I was striving to use the power of stillness in this play—again, letting the words do their work. Now that I look back on it, the foundation for this approach was in the mask work I did during my first quarter here with Jim Tompkins in the autumn of 1979. With a mask on, be it comical or neutral, an actor's "ticks" and meaningless movements practically assault the viewer. How very difficult it was for me to realize how little had to be done with the body to make the connection of an idea instantly perceived by the audience. I do not think I fully realized the importance and ramifications of the mask work then, but now it falls into place. I realized the essence of simplicity the day in rehearsal when I stopped tickling Elmire's lace in Act Three ("My, my, what lovely lacework on your dress./The workmanshps's miraculous, no less." p. 88). Instead, I reclined and cocked my head ever so slightly. That gesture felt correct and fully said everything I possibly could. The gesture leapt out as a direct point. It was enough to gaze at her bosom. Most importantly, I realized how proper and effective this "doing nothing" felt. I did not need to rely on distracting, meaningless gestures any longer.
The Delsarte technique of gesture was also of inestimable use to me in realizing the effect of economy of a performance, and in learning how to arrive at that economy in rehearsal. Ionia Zelenka taught the technique in the autumn of 1981. Briefly, the Delsarte technique is based on psychological gestures that emerge from three centers of the body: the physical, mental and emotional. The extremities of the body, such as the arms, head, eyes, create meaningful gestures by the relationships they establish with a particular center. For instance, moving an emotional extremity, the palm, to an intellectual center, the forehead, could indicate a troubling thought process. Gestures are created by the infinite variety of combinations of centers and extremities. Economy is a strict doctrine of the Delsarte technique, as is supporting the gesture with emotion. However, since most actors associate the technique with the florid style used in the nineteenth-century melodramas, and since it is a process that works from the external to the internal, many actors consider the technique superfluous and pretentious.

It is, though, based on the scientific observations made by Francoise Delsarte in the mid-1800s of how people use their bodies in response to their emotions. He found that gestures—specific physical movements—were based on the psychological or the inner state. We reflect our inner state through our bodies. He demanded that gesture be used by actors to show their character's needs, and that gesture be supported internally. Gesture is not superficial, but ingrained in the character. He wrote regarding his system, that nothing is as deplorable as a gesture without a motive, and the best gesture is one that is least apparent, which affects the spectator without his knowing it.10

The system for me is a tool I can use to derive, evaluate, and vary my work with psychological gesture, as well as maintaining a close regard to economy. In evaluating my work I have a concrete approach. I find my gestures outside of the system, normally in the organic process I have discussed, I explore and reserve those gestures which work best for me. If I find myself repetitive, excessive or at a loss for a correct gesture, I turn to the Delsarte. If repetitive gesture seems to be getting monotonous and are losing their efficacy in suggesting inner life, I decide what the original gesture was implying, and then look at what centers and extremities were in use. I can find centers of like meaning (a new intellectual center, perhaps) and use the same or a new extremity to create a new gesture.

Similarly, if I am at a loss to find a physical support for my vocal work, or if what I am doing simply does not collaborate with it,

I can create a stasis, or pose, for my body that reflects the inner strength of the character, and flesh it out, if necessary with gestures. To make this clearer, an example: when Tartuffe is condemning the entire house and handing out his curse and warning, the words were no problem, but I had no idea what to do with my physical presentation. I was self-consciously gangling about. I developed a stasis with my weight back, head back, and an elbow and flexed wrist back that was a classical Delsarte pose for defiance. I went into this stasis on top of the trunk on stage, giving it a commanding height, and finished it off with a slow firm arm raise that began at the elbow and eventually developed into a condemning point at Orgon. It was a very economical and sturdy solution. It allowed the words to be the primary focus while giving them full support.

This understanding of how to evolve gesture, and what each gesture means, made me cognizant of the many times my gestures were wasteful, and not communicating anything. You can not hide behind an empty gesture in the Delsarte system. I evaluated my gestures late in the rehearsal process, and cut an enormous amount of those that were not adding to my performance due to failure to be revelatory of the inner soul of Tartuffe. Some of these crept back into the performance, but unless I found a way to support them from within, I felt awkward going through the motions of them. They were excess that then fell to the side. Knowing this system forces one to be economical. There evolved for me a commanding stillness in this role, that was relaxing, but that had purpose in the movement. Without overburdening myself, I presented a full image of Tartuffe in my physical presence.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCHING TARTUFFE

In shaping my interpretation of Tartuffe, I limited my research to areas which could be of immediate use to me as an actor. I was seeking particular solutions to problems in the role, and hoped to find employable, active choices from my sources. Although my focus was directed in limited areas, rather than an extensive literary and critical analysis of the play, I was happily over compensated with a wealth of material from which I could draw. I specifically looked for images, background information, and aspects of religious ritual which could aid me in fleshing out my character and in creating his world.

I gained the most from an investigation of religious paintings, and paintings of artists of the period in which this play was set (1648). I sought artists' conceptions of physical images that conveyed the reverential attitude which Tartuffe is so adept at feigning. I studied both the exact body positions as well as the mood the composition, face, and surroundings established. I was also looking for religious icons with which the Orgon household would have been familiar, and images which reflected the piety they sought. Another purpose for research was to provide myself with pictorial representations of the time, in order to introduce my imagination to the life style, frame of mind, and ambiance of 1648. I pored over prints, photographic reproductions of paintings, sketches, detailed sections of the works, sculptures, and bas reliefs by painters from different time periods. The most detailed examinations were of the works of Vermeer, Le Nain, El Greco, Fra Angelico, Giotto, Rubens, and Caravaggio. I was curious to find which elements of the art were similar, even though they were produced in a different time period. The differences in interpretation yielded varying options for me in terms of dynamics and use of the body and eyes. I drew from the consistencies I found among all the artists, and incorporated their work into the seventeenth century milieu, modifying it to the necessities of the production. The artwork made a substantial contribution in refining my performance.

The most conspicuous application of the artwork was in its use as a model for configurations Tartuffe would assume. Interesting and appropriate postures that I found in the paintings were imitated closely or adapted slightly and inserted as a character pose in the staging of the play. I rearranged my blocking and physical appearance in many moments of the play as new poses were found during the course of the research. These alterations by me were possible because of the work
process the director and I had agreed upon, as explained in the introduction. The process allowed me much more freedom in incorporating and testing the new pictorial elements. In some instances, segments of the play were reblocked to better lead up to and focus the pose from the painting. Once such moment came late in Act Three, when Tartuffe is insisting he should leave the house, knowing Orgon will insist he stay. With a great effort, Tartuffe finally gives in, woefully shrugging his shoulders as he says, "If you wish it..." (p. 105). As I turned to Orgon with the line, I let my legs cross slightly, and placed one foot on the other, while my eyes gazed heavenward. This, combined with my raised arms from the shrug, was a reproduction of one of El Greco's many Crucifixion images. The director added to this pose by allowing hymn music to fade in, and by having Laurent, the servant, station himself with the enormous wooden crucifix in a spot where I would be backed by the cross.

The images from paintings were not always focussed in this manner. In other instances, the pose was never held, but used as a transitional device for me, allowing me to flow from one stasis to another, by way of an exact manner of movement. During the melee that ensues when Orgon casts his son, Damis, from the home, I was required to scramble from a position prostrate on the floor to the other side of the stage where I would calmly pour myself a chalice of wine. I came upon a Rubens bas relief "The Thieves Fleeing the Temple" which had an interesting character study in it. A man in the center of the work was an image which suggested to me a perfectly suitable pose to use in the chaotic moment of the play. The pose is quite Delsartian in composition, with the raised arm shielding the face indicating fear, while the pointed elbow signifies aggression, according to Delsarte. I also admired the opposition depicted in the body, with the torso surging forward while the head and legs balance the form by contrasting the focus to the rear. By putting the arm above the face, Rubens both framed the man's expression of urgency and succeeds in making him appear evasive and suspicious. I capitalized on all these qualities of the bas relief, and enriched the otherwise ordinary stage cross in addition to giving myself a concrete, specific image to create each time.

In addition to supplying me with poses for the total body, the paintings were equally serviceable in suggesting details which could polish my performance. I considered the artwork so that I could be

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12Peter Paul Rubens, Katalog 1, Museen der Stadt, Köln (1977), p. 362.
more assured in the placement of the smaller sections of my body, and feel confident that I knew exactly what I was doing throughout the play. In later rehearsals especially, I made notes of moments in the play when I felt my presence was not as refined as it could be. I had assumed the general poses, but they were not locked in a finished look with which I was satisfied. A majority of these moments were in times in which I was striking a religious vignette. (I may have been more critical of these moments since they were, in fact, representing Tartuffe's attempts at posing; in other sections of the play, when Tartuffe is not "acting" but pursuing an action what is of vital importance to him, I, along with the character, was less concerned with my appearance.) I perused the volumes of religious paintings, many of which included details from larger paintings, murals, and fresco ceilings.

The first difference that I noticed between what I was doing and what the paintings showed was the focus of the eyes. I found this difference apparent in examples of all the various painters and respective chronological periods. In the paintings, the eyes were always fixed at a point away from the other people in the picture. Sometimes they were lifted to heaven beseechingly or in adoration, sometimes downcast in humility. The focus of the eyes seemed to draw the figure out of the plane of the picture, as it connected the figure with a force outside the immediate situation, and pulled the character's attention away from the surrounding environment. I had been striking a pose, but leaving my eyes and attention on the other players. This made the affected posing seem without purpose, and artificial in the situation. When I incorporated a shift of focus in my performance, away from the stage action to a more distant area of the theatre, my energies suddenly felt more appropriate and concentrated. Suddenly, Tartuffe was using the posing to ignore and avoid the problem. The contrast in the stillness and inner peace of Tartuffe in these moments versus the chaos he had instigated gave the religious images added piquancy. Another example of using the artwork came with my first entrance. While one arm was supporting a crucifix, the other hand was free, I had nothing specific to do with it, and it seemed uninvolved merely hanging loose at my side. I turned to paintings of Christ, especially early works by Fra Angelico and Giotto. I felt their fourteenth century works were most indicative of the stark, monastic impression I wanted to simulate. Tartuffe was lampooning centuries-old Church traditions, and the Fra Angelico and Giotto works are similarly steeped in heritage. They are fine representations of religious art that bespeak respect, reverence, and solemnity even today. Tartuffe, too, was out to create the same impression. It seemed to be a convention of the artists to portray Christ with either a free hand over his heart, or with the palm of the hand upturned to God. Fra Angelico and Giotto drew hands

13Fra Giovanni Angelico da Fiesole (1387-1455) and Giotto di Bandone (1267-1337).
in two main ways: either with the last three fingers of the hand closed together with the index finger parted away, or with the two middle fingers together, and the index and small fingers parted. I opted for the second choice, as it had a more stylish, artistic quality to it. I entered with my hand in that position over my heart, and reused the gesture several times when Tartuffe went into pious repose. (Another such instance was when Damis held Tartuffe at bay at epee's end.) Other examples of using artwork as a model for character gesture are numerous. Over the course of rehearsing and performing the role, this new technique melded itself so totally in the characterization that I have forgotten all the instances when art was used as the basis for gesture. The two-dimensional painting became one with the three-dimensional character.

As I indicated in Chapter Two, the use of the research supported choices I had made in developing the physical aspect of my performance. While my process was primarily one which began internally, I arrived at many similarities between my presence and the likenesses in the paintings. A prime example of this is a painting by Antoine Le Nain, "The Trictrac Players."\(^{14}\) The picture is of five men around a cloth-draped table in an otherwise bare room. Two men, seated, play trictrac, a board game similar to backgammon. Three other men are standing, with one of these men at the left of the picture gazing out at something beyond the frame. The clothing of all the figures indicates bourgeois class. I found this painting weeks after I had begun to move about as Tartuffe, but it contains several points that so closely coincide with my performance that one might have thought I set out to copy it. It would have served as an ideal foundation for the Tartuffe I was creating, but coming across it as I did late in the process, it made me feel that I had made many fine intuitive choices. In the painting, the placement of the men's feet adheres to period custom of maintaining a slight turnout. The practice of showing the leg, and oneself, as elegantly as possible began in the royal circles, and was soon imitated by the lower classes. This stance is also seen in court portraits of the day, notably of Louis XIV. This was a period when men were especially vain about their legs, so it seemed logical that Tartuffe, in my interpretation, would be as flamboyant with his legs as he was. Dance training at this time also contributed to the formation of this style, as bourgeois men were instructed to maintain as open fifth position while stationary. From training in period movement at Ohio State and at Northeastern University, I had the skills to make use of this style before seeing evidence of it in the pictures.

The presence of the handkerchief in the hand of the man seated at the right indicates its popularity as an accessory to fashion. Those who use this prop during this time frequently are stereotyped on the stage as being dandies and fops. The setting and gentlemen we see depicted here show that assumption to be false. I was wary of creating the wrong impression for the audience in my use of the handkerchief through the play. I used it in ways that would have been appropriate to the character in his daily living, such as mopping sweat from the face or neck, or to freshen the senses by inhaling its cologne; it could also be used discreetly and suggestively to indicate interest to a lady, but never as a blatant semaphor.

I knew I wanted to make sport of my own thin legs with loose, ill fitting stockings. I was surprised to find these shown on the man seated left in the Le Main painting. Most ironic of all was to find the portrait of a languid, detached man standing behind the chair at the left of the picture. It is a startling depiction of what I was doing as Tartuffe. During rehearsals I was assuming a very similar pose while leaning against the virginal. The curve of the back, the relaxation in the figure, the innocent expression focussed on something other than the main action were all characteristics of my Tartuffe that I had been refining.

My research began with works of Johannes Vermeer (1632–1652) since our production was physically modelled after his paintings in its setting, costumes, and lighting. Vermeer's art was of little personal use in physically defining my character or in giving me a look at Tartuffe's world. Most of his work dealt with family life, and Tartuffe is definitely not part of a family. Vermeer did, however, give me a distinct feel for the home I was overpowering, and for the simple, honest folk of whom I would take advantage. Vermeer's paintings were most helpful in particularizing the ambiance and decor of the play for the entire cast. The cast could complete the world suggested by the design elements by imagining the rooms painted by Vermeer. The cast shared specific, Vermeer-inspired impressions of where the play was happening, and how the home was appointed. We knew the lighting, and open airiness of the rooms, and the cool stone walls and floors. Vermeer's works likewise inspired the characters' clothing, and suggested distinguishing characteristics we might use, from poses and chores depicted. Tartuffe's costume was based on "A Painter in His Studio" (circa 1666)15 which shows the back of a gentleman engaged in painting. There is a very cavalier, effusive quality in the way the man holds himself as he paints, which was a nice starting for my work on Tartuffe. One other Vermeer work, "Woman and Two Men"16 was pertinent to my work. In a simple action of a


16 Ibid., pp. 44-45.
gentleman handing a glass of wine to a lady, there is an interesting relationship developed. An uneasiness is displayed, in my estimation, despite the veneer of cordiality and propriety of the persons. What at first seems to be a touch of reassurance from the man on closer look is a prurient caress. His look of fondness is a leer. The woman sits, trapped and unable to do anything about the situation without being discourteous and affronting the man's station. She looks out of the picture plane at the viewer with a forced smile attempting to hide her discomfort, and with eyes asking us to spare her further humiliation. One can easily pretend the man is Tartuffe, and the woman Elmire or Marianne, while Orgon all the while sits impassively, ignorant of the interchange, at the left of the painting.

If Vermeer represented the world Tartuffe was seeking to join, and in time destroy, perhaps no artist better represents the world Tartuffe knew and inhabited as his own than Antoine Le Nain (1588-1648). The works attributed to him are actually the combined efforts of the three Le Nain Brothers, all living approximately during the same years. Antoine, Louis, and Mathieu looked at life through the eyes of a peasant, producing a very woody, country, masculine aura in their paintings. The majority of their work shows the poor trying to eek out a daily living, farming, cooking, trading, begging, and getting by any way they can. Many paintings show men in their restricted quarters, drinking, smoking, and betting, after soldiering and hunting. The Le Nain environment is dimly lit, unkempt, naturalistic and a more "dirt-under-the-fingernails" milieu than the clean, soft and classically beautiful Vermeer. One can imagine the true Tartuffe, penniless and hungry, scrounging in the Le Nain world by begging, gambling, and cheating. "The Tricksters"17 is typical of the Le Nain genre. Two men play a card game for money. The man at the right (whom I imagine to be Tartuffe) is about to throw an ace. He is reading a signal from his stooge (Laurent) who flashes the sign behind his opponent's back. The innocent-looking opponent (Orgon) is oblivious of the trick.

One of the first paintings I found that expressed the conviction in Tartuffe's guise was "The Repast of the Peasants"18 by the brothers Le Nain. A tired, saddened, ragged pauper is lost in prayer while a family is torn between feeding and entertaining him and themselves, or remaining still until his revery passes. The picture borders on the humorous and the poignant. I could see Tartuffe putting the household in a similar holding pattern. It was an exciting image for me, and sparked a great number of choices to play in rehearsals. The Tartuffe I set out to create oscillated between

this humble impoverished soul and the leaning aloof man in "The Trictrac Players."

As I have already discussed, both Giotto and Fra Angelico were used mainly as a base for my religious interpolations. As well as borrowing detail from these artists, their works helped me to better understand the pervasive religious atmosphere Tartuffe was manufacturing. Giotto displayed keen regard for the quiet dignity in the religion of the common class. Religion was private, a part of the home, and not grand and ostentatious. By looking at the Fra Angelico paintings I saw specific uses of the hands when holding sacred objects and the consistent use of the eyes to express devotion. The Fra Angelico figures have stark, blanched faces, as if in suffering. These pitiable, underfed, angular people could be represented easily on my own thin frame. Tartuffe, using these lamentable characteristics, could easily sway Orgon's heart with his apparent need. The Fra Angelico palette suggested using a very white base to my makeup, with darkened, hollow eyes. As an actor, I needed to explore the realm of these religious icons before being able to turn them against their intended purpose in satire.

After weeks of trying to find the proper entrance for Tartuffe, when we first see him with his enormous cross constructed from tree limbs, I found the answer in a book of El Greco prints, in a very small detail of a larger work. The solution was a very simple manner of carrying the cross over one shoulder, not unlike a Marine shouldering his rifle. The director and I had tried every other way we could devise, and it was only after I came across this painting that I was satisfied with the result. The painting is "Christ Carrying the Cross," circa 1590-95.19 The El Greco sacred works could easily be simulated as they are lean in style, although more healthy and vigorous than the Fra Angelico.

The works of Peter Paul Rubens and Michelangelo da Caravaggio gave me a more robust milieu to investigate, with a look and emotional quality which was passionate, physical, and sensuous. The ruckus at the end of Act Three, when Tartuffe has upset the household and Orgon is exiling Damis, denying his wife, and handing over the deed of the house to Tartuffe, contained several Rubens and Caravaggio images. Especially helpful were the strong feelings of opposition and tension in the Rubens works, as emotion rippled through the bodies, exaggerated by uplifted shoulders, outstretched arms, and twisted necks. Caravaggio's faces draw you to them with their empty, longing expressions crying out for food and human contact.

19 Located in the New York Metropolitan Museum, The Lehman Collection. A print is found in El Greco, Every Painting, David Piper editor, p. 52.
I doubt anyone watching the performances of Tartuffe would have realized the great amount of "stealing" I was doing. The painting poses were only recreates for brief moments, en route to doing something else. I would glide into and out of a pose, or use a specific detail momentarily, without ever pointing up the fact for the audience. The poses were meant to look like realistic action. The use of the paintings was purely a private acting tool for myself.

In addition to the paintings, I looked at several different versions of the Stations of the Cross, done in sculpture, bas relief, and sketches, hoping to find new ideas for staging. For a while, I made a trek across the stage with the crucifix, and stumbled with it, falling to the ground, recalling Christ's journey. The cross was eventually eliminated when it was mutually decided between myself and the director that it was too elaborate, blatantly seeking a laugh, and perhaps in poor taste for some of the audience.

My emphasis in all the artwork explorations was in finding suitable, interesting images which could become an immediate part of my performance. I turned to the paintings when my own work was not as specific as it could be, or when I felt it lacked excitement. The images found gave me many more instances in the play when I could use an economical, exact physical approach.

To deal with the religious aspects inherent in Tartuffe, the director invited a Catholic priest, Rev. Paul Robichand, to come in and answer questions from the cast. Rev. Robichand led us through an intensive discussion about the meaning of ritual in our lives, and impressed upon us the great role the Church had in establishing ritual in the home of the seventeenth century. The penitent nature of Christians evolved from their ritual and deep faith. Tartuffe's manner in dominating the family was really quite logical: the family, in its faith, was ripe to believe anything of a seemingly pious nature. Of course, only Orgon is duped, as the truly holy family sees through the masquerade of the non-Christian.

Rev. Robichand also showed me how to use different Church instruments of the Mass, such as the aspergellum. Then we went through a variety of forms of supplication, on the knees and prone to the ground. These supplications, which were of different time periods and were intended to show different levels of penitence, eventually found places in the production. Flagellation was used as I confessed to Orgon, "Yes, Brother, I'm a wicked man, I fear" (p. 97). Tartuffe later assumes the role of guilty penitent suffering for his sins:

Load me with all the names you most abhor;
I'll not complain; I've earned them all and more;
I'll kneel here while you pour them on my head
As a just punishment for the life I've led. (p. 98)
The lines were delivered on the knees, face to heaven, with the arms outstretched to the sides. This supplicant pose was intended to make the person holding it suffer physical pain by keeping the arms out in the air for an extended period of time.

In addition to our talk with the priest, the director led the cast in discussions and presentations that brought information to us about the play. We listened to music of the period, and had evenings of recitation of literature of this time. There were Bible readings, in the manner of a seventeenth century family sitting around the fire. These informal gatherings helped to establish the feel of everyday life for us. It was a much simpler time, not nearly as diverse as modern society. Certain customs and manners, such as the amount of contact a man and woman could make, the art of conversation and etiquette, fluency at dance and music, all had a direct bearing on how scenes should be handled. Elmire's first meeting with Tartuffe is kept in the vein of polite conversation, although they both have a great deal more at stake. Similarly, there were parameters as to just how far Tartuffe could go with his ravishment of Elmire in Act Four. We experimented with much physical business, and threw a great deal of it away because we were doing things Elmire simply would not have permitted with her background in seventeenth century life. However, by the end of the seduction scene, even Elmire is forced to forego her restrictions as she tries to convince Orgon of Tartuffe's lechery. We also discussed penitent observances Tartuffe could have imposed on the family, the prison system Tartuffe probably knew from the inside, and the degradation and lack of education that must have been Tartuffe's background as a scavenger of the time. These were only hypothesis on our part, but it did help me to establish motives for his actions in the play. The purpose of these discussions was to give our performances a richer texture and to create a period world in which our characters lived.

Still, in honest consideration, I do not think I presented a period man so much as a unique character man. My Tartuffe did not present all the daily trappings and mannerisms of the bourgeois 1640s, because in fact he would not have assumed them. His low station in life and the ruse he was perpetrating prohibited his displaying high style. When we do see the real Tartuffe, he is not so much a product of 1648 as he is a self-made man. He has given himself his own idea of elegance and class. Because the character was an outcast of the time, he could not indulge in the period style, so instead I indulged in making him unique.

Every actor playing Tartuffe will set about to show his special interpretation. There is no classic, definitive Tartuffe. Yet, in a role so laden with tradition as this, or in any other with a history, I believe any actor will choose those aspects of the role
which point to his strengths. Every actor playing Tartuffe draws ideas from the pool begun my Moliere years ago. I investigated the reviews of actors who had used this same Wilbur translation in professional instances, to compare my observations with theirs. John Wood's 1978 version and Michael O'Sullivan's 1965 production, both in New York, shared some similarities with mine. Both men are described as having lean bodies, with an emphasis in their characterization on gangling legs. Both were oily in appearance. John Wood played verbal acrobatics with the language, while Michael O'Sullivan hammered and shouted the text, relying on physical humor. Both played up Tartuffe's excessiveness. I reviewed these critiques late in the rehearsal process to see if I was working in a similar direction, and surprisingly, the play had led me to the same strengths. I greedily borrowed John Wood's business of entering with handfuls of rosaries, both because it was a delightful idea and because I felt as if I was continuing a tradition by using part of the work of an actor in a previous production. It was also due to tradition that we staged Tartuffe's mock death in what was known to the cast as "the Moliere chair." We had designated one specific chair on the set (as does the Commedia Francaise) to commemorate the death of Moliere, who died seated on stage in a production of "The Imaginary Invalid."

The facets of life in Tartuffe cannot be fully realized by organic means. In order to be secure in my performance, I felt that it was necessary to find supporting evidence for my choices in artwork, Church ritual, period manners and customs, and in the work of previous Tartuffes. Tartuffe is, after all, a play steeped in tradition and history, and to deny these aspects of the play their full exploration does it injustice.
CHAPTER FOUR

ACTING PROCESS

Each role brings to me acting problems that must be solved in order to make the role come alive. Frequently, the problems are the same from role to role, but the manner in dealing with them changes, due to the specifics of the particular role. The main problems that reoccur for me are commitment, being honest and real on stage, not "pushing" for laughs, finding compelling objectives, allowing myself to be vulnerable, and taking risks.

I realized, going into rehearsals for Tartuffe, that there were two ideas regarding the play that most every audience member has, and that I most certainly had, and that to cling to those ideas would bring about a dreadful performance. Those preconceptions were that Tartuffe is an evil and cunning hypocrite and that the play is one of the funniest ever written. The first statement, if I followed it through, was sure to lead me to playing general qualities: acting out what evil is, showing off as a fake, instead of being a human person who goes about things, the result being that others see him as a fake. Tartuffe is not faking: he's dead serious about the things he wants, so there is no reason for the actor to fake the faking. In the second instance, if one honestly considers the things Tartuffe does in the "name of God," namely, the confiscation of a family's home, the expulsion of a son, the seduction of his friend's wife, the destruction of a young girl's happiness, it is not a very funny play. It is in fact a tragedy, except for the last moments of hackneyed deus ex machina. Tartuffe is a life and death situation for everyone involved. Yet, I knew that thinking of it as a comedy would push me into playing for laughs, and kill off any honesty and believability in the character of Tartuffe. If Tartuffe is not frighteningly real, there is no play.

Both these aspects point to one of the greatest challenges in acting for any actor, and one which I probably fail in as often as I succeed: creating a believable, real, honest person who lives and behaves while an audience happens to be watching. When an actor is free and able to react spontaneously and naturally, without an edge of self-consciousness, and without an overexuberance to perform and present his new persona, the character, the acting is more apt to draw in the audience with its conviction. In life, people are surprised, moved, and spurred to action without preplanning and emphasizing their emotions to make sure others will notice them. If someone continually makes know his supposed illness and depression, we soon fail to believe the depth of his sickness; we consider it affected. Real suffering is compelling, pretense is not. On the stage, behavior that is contrived
and precious is similarly unbelievable, and does not sustain interest. It is far more satisfying to become one with and behave as the character, than to pretend you are the character, and act as if you were behaving. No one wants to watch an actor demonstrate his acting process, pretending to do things. We want to see that actor actually go through actions and feel real emotion. The worst way to act is to "act." I spend most of my time trying not to act, but in trying to be.

Tartuffe must be a fine actor in order to succeed in his "con game." The role is fraught with risk, as everyone in the theatre, both onstage and in the audience, waits for Tartuffe to slip and how us that he is acting, performing, pretending to be something he is not. The challenge is carrying out Tartuffe's charade is to be so convincing that everyone will believe you are in fact not acting, and that the actor is not acting Tartuffe's acting. Once I have "become" Tartuffe, I must let Tartuffe, in turn, become the impoverished soul, with no acting techniques showing.

My approach to the role, then, is not in terms of being funny, but in wanting to devour the family, the home, and faith of these people. This must be a genuine need of Tartuffe's. The director and I decided in early rehearsals to play Tartuffe as a monster of some sort, a deranged megalomaniac, a schizophrenic who careens from one mad, all encompassing passion to the next. This took some of the burden off of playing "to be a con artist." Tartuffe was not "conning" anyone, but instead wanted to do everything he did. All his plays and devices were not premeditated, they sprang from his subconscious in the desire to envelope his objective of the moment. He really became distraught when he was burdened with the house. He really did want to confess to being "a wicked man," because something in his mind convinced him he must purge these emotions.

This angle of approaching the character was not intended to be bizarre interpretation of the arch scoundrel whom audiences expected to see. It was a mental tool or game for me. I played the moments of the script asking, "What if I indeed needed to do this and that?" This prevented me from pretending to want something. This relieved some of my tendencies to "act" everything I was doing and I could more clearly go after a specific objective, rather than perform a facade of wanting something.

Before the production opened, we dropped this game but kept the techniques of going after specific objectives that were the result of this rehearsal game. We now dared to show some of the scoundrel underneath the facade, and to get back to some of the fun of the imposter Tartuffe. The very thin line in performances was to be thrown off balance by an action, and in response choose an objective to which Tartuffe would commit himself totally, in order to "con" the house. For example, when Damis reports that Tartuffe is making advances at Elmire, Tartuffe is at a loss. He must scramble back with a new ploy.
I took the objective of making Orgon believe Tartuffe's confession. If Orgon does not get taken in by it, the use is over for Tartuffe. What emanated from the objective was a combination of searing urgency to not be misunderstood, a child-like repentance, and acquiescence on Tartuffe's part to take whichever punishments were in store.

The chameleon-like nature of Tartuffe made it difficult to play one sustained objective. Instead, I found points of concentration and objectives that kept me moving on to a new goal by quickly shifting from one to another. In doing this to keep Tartuffe's veneer ever-changing, I sacrificed full exploration of any one objective, as well as a totally involved commitment to it during performance. However, during the rehearsal process, I had used each of the individual objectives at length through the scene to see its effect. For example, in the first Elmire scene, several of the goals I set out to complete were to examine how Elmire's clothes fit her body, make her at ease in the room, feel the intense, draining heat, feel the physical condition of being on the brink of fainting, letting Elmire know that I desired her, and wooing Elmire (through her intellect, her sense of humor, her playfulness, her sexual desire, her aesthetics). Although in performance I played each of these objectives through only part of the scene, jumping from one to another, in rehearsal each had been played through the entire scene to see that results it would produce.

An actor must be totally committed to and indulge in objectives and points of concentration. They are a point of focus for the mind, a focus that is so pinpointed it involves the actor's total being and gives him something positive to try to accomplish in the scene. The actor gives himself over to these exercises, and does not pre-evaluate the responses, rather permitting the responses to produce themselves organically from within. He begins behaving in ways which will allow him to reach his objective, or he reacts in certain emotional and physical responses to a point of concentration, totally free and unconcerned about any other factors of the moment (for example, that there are spectators, if the emotion is appropriate, if he is compromising his dignity, and so forth). In the process of everyday life, we all become absorbed by chores and preoccupied with thoughts to such an extent that we lose sight of the world around us and, without thinking, alter our behavior. Say, for example, I am trying to dislodge the lid of a very tightly sealed jar. I might wrestle with it, pound it, put it under hot water, burn my hand, curse, throw the jar, hit someone, apologize, and unleash my frustration on the next person I see. My total involvement with the objective of getting the lid off the jar prompted a whole series of actions, reactions, and behavior that I could not have planned, and to which I responded spontaneously. In another instance, pretend I am out with a close friend, and I have to inform him that he has cancer. My intense thought of that subject will lead me to behaving in various ways; I will try to be cheerful, make him comfortable, search for the right words, perhaps tears will come to my eyes. The behavior begins
naturally in these instances without our knowing quite how we will react, and without our forcing it in any certain direction. Concentration on a particular objective or point opens us up, willingly, to new behavior. The same process occurs on the stage.

In the first scene with Elmire, some of the by-products of this rehearsal technique were as follows. In trying to see the fit of clothing on Elmire, I found myself going into the trance-like state that people go into when they are infatuated or swooning with love. I became absorbed in the folds of her dress, the amount of flesh that was showing, the rows of pearl buttons, how the bow was tied to her wrist—there were so many details to observe I could never have the time on stage to finish the task. I lost myself in doing the task, until she would say or do something nightly that would prevent me from going further. I then moved to the next objective, in order to vary the texture of the scene. At any moment I could go back to observing her dress, knowing I could be very precise and specific in doing that. Being totally absorbed in looking at something makes the actor forget the other surrounding environment, in fact, makes the actor forget all about himself, freeing him from self-consciousness and producing behavior that is relaxed, natural, and always fresh and different. My point of concentration exercise of heat, for example, yielded an enormous amount of physical response. With a very specific heat in mind during rehearsals—that of the July mid-afternoon sun beating down relentlessly—I became dry-throated, began to sweat, the clothes began to itch and feel uncomfortable, there began a throbbing in my temples, I felt short of breath and languid, and so on. This, like the objective of scrutinizing Elmire’s dress, was a very specific, focussed idea to which I could instantly turn my attention.

Objectives and points of concentration should be enjoyable challenges for the actor to play. He should be stimulated by his choice, and be willing to commit totally to it, unconcerned about what the response will be. This is an actor’s tool, and only works as well as the actor is willing to commit to it. It is not a tool to please the director or any one else, but helps get the actor out of him imposed psychological restrictions and begin behaving, not acting. The more difficult the objective is to accomplish and the more unique and exciting the choice, the more risky the results will be. The actor willingly will be putting himself on the line for God-knows-what to happen: he will be open and vulnerable, and compelling to watch.

I am still trying to explore new ways of choosing exciting objectives. I have a tendency to choose and be content with those objectives I know will be easy to accomplish. I had a few such choices in Tartuffe. These were not nearly as satisfying to play as the ones that sparked a tingle of "I wonder what will happen if I go after this?" More and more with my growth, though, I am allowing myself
to shoot for bigger risks and not concern myself with what may happen to me. I am willing to fall now because I am learning how to trust that failure, knowing I will make myself scramble back with something that may be exciting to watch. There is still a part of me, however, that reserves itself, and does not push this sense of vulnerability far enough. That will take years of trust to accomplish.

Tartuffe is not a vulnerable character as written, so the risk came in setting out after grand objectives which could possibly fail. There had to be the sense that something was on the line, in the balance, and that Tartuffe could at any moment be forced to run for his life. There are no blatantly vulnerable, emotional breakdowns to go through, except for the confessing sequence, which I tried to get to work for me, never succeeding. I wanted an emotional breakdown so strongly that I think I shut off my powers to do so. How marvelous the speech would have been having a repentant, unholy Tartuffe spewing tears. But I could not find the right choice to compell me through that, so I had to settle for less.

Part of the problem with that sequence, and part of the reason I do not think Tartuffe was a total success for me, was that I found it dreadfully difficult to keep my mental powers continually two full steps ahead of the game. Frequently I was at a point in the play before I was mentally prepared for it. Then, I was not instigating action, but going through the rehearsed routine. The play's events sometimes occured so quickly that I could not keep up. But at those times when I was ahead of the game, knowing exactly on which objective I was concentrating, and another cast member conflicted with that choice honestly, it almost always knocked me off balance and made me vulnerable. The scramble to the next objective to regain Tartuffe's control was exciting to watch. It was during these moments that I was trusting myself enough to know that I did not have to do the routine as planned. I let my inspiration take over in a natural reaction. I was listening, reacting, and letting the events of the play surprise me. I did not know what was going to happen next. It was extremely difficult to put my concentration in a place so that I could be surprised nightly. It certainly did not work for me all the time. I think the confession never worked because I was unable to put myself in a position to be surprised and to let the confession be a spontaneous reaction.

Another problem that was very easy for me to lapse into was shirking full commitment to the problem at hand, or to the language. I discussed making each word live in Chapter One. I found that when I was not specific with the language it was because I had slacked off in my objective and my commitment to that objective. It was almost as if I said "I've done this before and it was okay, so it will be fine tonight." It made me extremely annoyed and angry with
myself when I caught myself in this holding pattern, knowing I was giving a slack performance. At those moments it seemed doubly hard to commit totally to something, until some time passed, and then I relaxed once more and gave myself to the work again. I must force myself to commit to the problem on stage one hundred percent of the time. Another aspect of this same problem of commitment is that frequently I choose easily obtainable objectives. Instead of committing to choices which will be difficult and conceivably make me vulnerable, I go after objectives that are easy and fun to accomplish. I take the route that avoids the conflict because in my own life, I try to avoid conflict. I want to be entertaining and pursue those choices that play up the humor, and not those that I have to give of myself to complete, forcing myself to do things that are uncomfortable to me. My final analysis of my performance as Tartuffe is weakened because I know that many times I was trying to be funny, rather than trying to destroy the house. The final impression of my Tartuffe was very coy, cut, impish, whereas I would have preferred it to be threatening. In committing to weak objectives, I prevented myself from creating a threatening performance. As I discussed in the introduction to this paper, the great majority of my performance was structured by me. The director allowed me the freedom to create my own characterization. Its success depended on which objectives I intended to commit to.

The presence of the first audience at the preview also led me to one of my weaknesses, playing for laughs from the audience rather than the dynamics of the scene. Many times I will sacrifice the conflict in the scene or the character's integrity by pointing up my comic business in order to get a favorable response. I want to see just how funny my performance is. Usually, I feel the need to do this at least once, and to get it out of my system so that the remaining performances can once again be under control. I like to have a preview audience because I know I have this tendency. Once I know where the laughs may be, I can think about under-playing those moments as to prevent excessiveness. The preview was a very stale performance despite the laughs I garnered. The play was missing its conflict, and its complete Tartuffe. I have shown growth in my handling of this problem.

Ridding myself of the need to play for laughs, coupled with increased concentration in objectives has led me to behave and play naturally without a thin "acting" film over everything I do. I remember how strange it felt when I found the ease of relaxing in a role with Waiting for Godot in the studio production in which I played Vladimir. It felt as if I was not "doing" anything on stage. It felt so barren, yet at the same time, rich and right. I have come a long way in finding that feeling for myself more and more often in the work I do. I think Talley's Folly was the first time I had that feeling through an entire evening, but because of my freedom in the role, the technical aspects of performing such as
economy and vocal work were not as refined. The fine line between the two is quite a challenge to maintain.

I think experience and confidence in my work has now allowed me the courage to enter the stage and say "Join me in this character. If you don't like it, be quiet so others can." I do not have to be pleasing to everyone. I know there will be people who do not find my performance to their liking. Knowing that and shrugging it off has developed a security in my acting. I am my only guage as to how good my work is. Compliments are fine, but I have to have my own belief in what I am doing before I will accept any of them. I may fail, but at least I have the courage to do that. I now understand the old expression of "letting the audience come to you." It means not pushing your performance in order to win them over and warm them. I was struck by a lyric Lena Horne sings in her 1981 Broadway show, The Lady and Her Music, which sums it up best. It has become a maxim I remember before I go on stage: "If they're gonna be cold, let 'em freeze!" It ties in directly with my acting because having a storehouse of confidence in yourself can only help you. Now, instead of coming on stage and showing the audience my entire characterization in a minute and a half, and then not developing in the rest of the play, I can relax, and reveal different aspects of the character in different scenes. I peel away the different facades, until the different views we see of the man emerge and combine to show him in his complexity. I am confident that my work will hold the audience's attention if I take my time. Because of this assurance, I have made headway into the craft of layering a part. I want to create the kind of characters who always leave the audience wondering what they will do next, even after they have left the theatre. The layering of a character ties in strongly with the shrewd choice of objectives, and their appropriate placement in the text. I was proud of the progression I developed for ultimately showing all the cards that Tartuffe held.

My acting process is one of going through rehearsals from the general to the specifics of the character. In rehearsals and production I continually like to try to find the limits of the character and the scene. What new angle and fact can I expose? During my rehearsal process, I work from the exterior technical aspects of physicality and vocal approach, to eventually moving inside the shell of the character to find emotional motivations and support. I make grand pendulum swings between the two, some days being unnatural and broad, other days being introspect and barely audible. The rehearsal process is an extremely vulnerable time for all actors, and at times I can resent the director and other actors for being involved in the private matter of putting myself into a new person. I do not mind the work involved, but I hate for anyone, even my fellow artists, to see my performance until it is a finished product. I prefer to take notes home, and work on them, instead of being asked to give results while the director waits. I feel that I am
floundering and do not want others to witness it. I am aware that this emotional barrier will be part of every rehearsal process for me, and I have learned to ride it out for a few days, until I can become more open. I also know that the floundering will eventually clear and congeal into a more concrete, polished performance.
CONCLUSIONS

When I made the decision to come to graduate school, my goal was to build confidence in myself as an actor. I knew I was not sufficiently trained to work professionally. I have made great progress here, in voice, movement, truthful acting, and in building my own confidence. Now I feel prepared.

Lessac vocal work has taught me how to stop abusing my voice. I still do not use it properly all of the time, but now I am aware of when it is being used improperly and I know how to make corrections. I can maintain my vocal power through a role without stripping my voice. I used to injure my voice all the time. Ever since I began using proper support and focus, that problem has left. This combined with what I have experienced in using the language of a play gives me a solid background for the future. Along the same lines, my singing voice has improved greatly due to the work I did with private lessons in the School of Music. Although I still tend to push my singing voice, frequently to extremes, I now have control over it, and have a solid approach based on drills and support.

One of the greatest accomplishments I have made here is being able to relax on stage. A great part of this comes from physically releasing tensions I have carried with my body for many years. The shoulder/neck tensions I had have been dissolved away through exercises, and by mentally releasing them. That process had been taught under Jim Tompkins' movement class. I am now aware of tension I develop in my forehead, and am working to concentrate on not falling prey to this.

Another boon to relaxation has been my ability to totally give myself over and commit to strong, interesting objectives, and to be free to open myself emotionally to my roles. Since I started at Ohio State University, my acting has become a great deal more convincing, real, honest, and interesting, and I hope compelling and exciting. My experience and success in some roles, and my realization of my shortcomings in others serves as proof to my growth.

I have developed an acting process, and an arsenal of techniques and skills to take with me. Included are Delsarte, commedia, clown, and mask techniques, and the skills of singing and tap dancing. These will serve me in the future, providing a firm base from which to continue to grow and build. I have also the confidence and reassurance that risk and work pay off.
APPENDIX

The following reviews of the production are from the two major daily Columbus newspapers. They appear unedited.
OSU continues mastery of Moliere

By Rose Hume
Dispatch Entertainment Editor

Ohio State University once again proved its dexterity with Moliere in Tartuffe, which opened Tuesday in Stadium II Theatre.

The comic story of blind devotion and hypocrisy received a deft handling under the direction of Byron Ringland. In the past few years, OSU regularly has staged Moliere. Just as regularly, the results have been wonderful evenings of theater.

With William Strzempek in the title role, a brilliant satire of religious devotion is guaranteed. Strzempek can both kneel like an altar boy with a "who, me?" look and snarl like a fox about to make a kill. His expressive eyes and elastic mouth lead to lots of chuckles. He got into his role body and soul.

Tartuffe takes place on the estate of Orgon, a wealthy man who welcomes the traitor into his home because he is impressed by Tartuffe's expressions of humility and love for things heavenly. Little does Orgon realize that the heavenly things Tartuffe loves include Orgon's wife and property.

THE BEST OF Orgon's household is wise to Tartuffe, but the master of the house refuses to open his eyes until he is nearly squeezed out of all he holds dear.

Christy Barker and Catherine A. Nix, frequently seen in OSU's period pieces, bring their special magic to the roles of Orgon's wife Elmire and servant, respectively.

Demure and sensible as Elmire, Barker's subtle comic touches are just right for a lady of the 17th century. Nix dives right in and supplies the servant with bold decisiveness that keeps the show moving.

Orgon needs to be larger than life since his household seemingly revolves around his presence, although we all know Nix's servant really runs the place. John Kuhn captures that sense of bigness. He is straightforward in his approach to the role of a man who is a big fool, as well as the major presence on the estate.

An Act 1 confrontation between Nix and Kuhn makes one of the production's best scenes. Her pointed wit wounds repeatedly until his only defense is to dismiss her from the room.

The glassy-eyed devotion of young love lights up the face of Elizabeth Schmelz. As Orgon's daughter, she first stands in awe of her father and yet grows confident enough to at least try to change his marital intentions for her.

JEFF YAGHER plays Cleante, the voice of reason and logic, who never grows preachy or scolding in his counseling. This is one production where the sensible character didn't fade into the woodwork or overstep his bounds.

Mme. Peronelle, a babbling bulldozer in skirts, plows right through the household with the hilarious efforts of Jane E. Hurst.

The entire cast is to be commended for speaking the rhyming couplets in rhythms and modulations that kept the play as interesting to hear as to watch.

Ringland uses a broad, sometimes slapstick approach to Tartuffe that elicits many laughs.

The inventive use of music composed by Paul Robinson is another bright spot in OSU's Tartuffe.

Michelle Guilhot's costumes are lavishly beautiful.

Tartuffe will continue at 8 p.m. through Saturday in Stadium II Theatre at Drake Union. Additional performances are Tuesday through March 6.
Ohio State 'Tartuffe' has light, tangy flavor

BY RICHARD JONAS

The Ohio State University Theatre version of "Tartuffe" is a deliciously light trifle that savors Molière's time- less comedy without losing the sharp under-taste of its moral about blind faith.

The rhyming couplets of the Richard Wilbur translation sing with the seemingly effortless delivery of a fine cast. In motion as in speech, these actors are polished and thoroughly of the period, thanks in part to the efforts of a voice and diction coach (Ionia Zelenka), movement coach (Tom Leabhart) and fencing coach (Charles Simonian).

Additional credit goes to Michelle Bullot for lovely costumes and to lighting designer Steve Boone and technical director Richard C. Ruggins for fine effects. Chris Flaharty's spare set for the in-the-round presentation is functional and attractive, though a few of the nearly continuous bits of comic business are obscured by the prie-dieu or the onstage harpsichord.

The Augustans (James P. Bailey, baroque flute and recorder; Suzanne Ferguson, recorder and viola de gamba; and David F. Robinson, harpsichord) and Bob Robinson (synthesizer and guitar) supply original mood music composed by Paul Robinson. Though well-suited to the production and highly effective during the entr'actes, the music is occasionally distracting during on-stage action.

For pulling it all together in a bril- liant adaption of the 17th century classic, director Byron Ringland merits generous praise.

As the saucy and outspoken maid Dorine, who shows a good deal more sense than any of her betters, Catherine A. Nix gives a performance that is full-bodied and funny. Eavesdropping on every conversation and meddiling in the affairs of the family she serves, Dorine is at the very center of Molière's dark comedy, and Miss Nix is at the center of this "Tartuffe's" success.

Equally fine is William Strzempek as the sanctimonious scoundrel Tartuffe, who poses as a pious holy man to gain entry into the house of the wealthy Orgon (John Kuhn), make love to his wife and persuade him to sign over all his worldly goods. With a self-scrout around his neck and self-serving platitudes for every occasion, Strzempek's Tartuffe is a memorable one.

Kuhn portrays the gullible Orgon with a bit too much volume, but the other players are fine.

Chief among them are J.T. Terlesky as the hot-headed Damis, Elizabeth Schmelz as the timorous Mariane, Chris- ty Barker as the resourceful Elmire, Jeff Yaghe as the wise Cleanie and Mark Gichrist as Valere, Mariane's suitor.

The second act is slower and less enjoyable than the first, dealing as it does with the somber consequences of Orgon's folly and containing a lengthy discourse on the wisdom of Louis Qua- torze (public relations on Moliere's part, one suspects), but this is due more to the work itself than to the efforts of the company.

"Tartuffe" continues Feb. 24-27 and March 2-6 at Stadium II Theatre in Drake Union.
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