Study Guide:  

_The Game of Love and Chance_  

by **Marivaux**  

adapted and translated by **Nicolas Billon**  

directed by **Matthew Jocelyn**  

April 16 – May 12, 2012  

a Canadian Stage/Centaur Theatre  

co-production  

Overview and Classroom Activities
Study Guide: *The Game of Love and Chance*

A letter to teachers and students:
Education is a vital part of what we do at Canadian Stage. We are committed to sharing material with our audiences that will challenge, enrich and deepen their perspectives. Sharing art diversifies our conversations. Marivaux’s romantic comedy *The Game of Love and Chance* in particular raises thought-provoking discussion around topics of class, identity and love among other universal issues.

*The Game of Love and Chance* is a translation of noted French playwright Pierre de Marivaux’s 18th century play *Le Jeu de l’amour et du hasard*. Marivaux, a contemporary of Molière, was one of France’s most influential writers of his time, boasting a portfolio of 30 to 40 plays in addition to numerous essays, articles and unfinished novels. An in-depth understanding of this play’s 18th century French origins provides the context needed to recognize how theatrical trends, societal structures and individuals’ behaviours have evolved (and stayed the same) over time. Furthermore, familiarity with the original form, such as its commedia dell’arte roots, will enhance the audience’s appreciation for director Matthew Jocelyn’s modernized staging. Consider how the direction, stage design and performances have been modified in this updated production and why these choices were made.

This version of *The Game of Love and Chance* is an original translation by Canadian playwright Nicholas Billon, written specifically for a modern North American audience. It lends itself to an exploration of the timelessness and cross-cultural facets of theatre. Ultimately, a modern audience will realize that some aspects of our lives are quite similar to the circumstances presented in this classic French work.

While the narrative of *The Game of Love and Chance* is relatively simple, its curriculum connections are rich. As you will see, there are many access points to English, History, Sociology, and Anthropology curriculums among others. This particular production of Marivaux’s work is certain to trigger enlightening conversations among students from diverse disciplines and backgrounds.

I look forward to seeing you at the theatre!

Cheers,

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This study guide is created to be a helpful resource for teachers by providing background and thematic information about this play as well as practical activities to use in your classroom. You are encouraged to draw information directly from it as well as to use it as a roadmap for further exploration. In it you will find:

- Synopsis and Character List
- Theatrical Context
- Historical/Social Context
- Study Links;
- Critical Exploration;
- Pre- and Post-Show Activities

**A Student’s Guide to Live Theatre**

**Here are your responsibilities:**

1. Thank you in advance for turning off your cell phone, iPod, iPhone or anything else that makes noise before entering the theatre. These items distract the actors, your classmates and you! They can also affect our in-house technical signals and spoil the show. This is a common courtesy. Vibrate/silent is not the same as off.

2. No texting! Because your phone is off you will need to wait until intermission to update your Facebook status (and when you login, link to Canadian Stage at [www.facebook.com/cdnstage](http://www.facebook.com/cdnstage)).

3. No headphones of any sort. Listening to your own media is not only rude, but distracting to those around you.

4. In order to respect our theatre and you, our patrons, we only allow water in the theatre and no other food or drinks.

5. Please refrain from talking during the performance - the actors and the audience will hear you! (Laugh when it’s funny, cry when it’s sad. Otherwise, zip it!)

6. Please sit in the seat assigned to you. If you sit elsewhere the seating for everyone is disrupted.

7. Represent your school and yourself well with good behavior. Theatre is awesome. You should be too!

8. Keep an open mind and think critically. Theatre is engaging and challenging. Be prepared to examine what you see rather than judge it. You’ll be surprised how much you learn, even about yourself, when you try to see things differently.

9. Enjoy the show and come again soon!
The Game of Love and Chance

Synopsis
The play takes place at the Orgon household in Paris. Silvia and Dorante are engaged to be married but have never met. On paper they are a perfect match yet each wants to be sure the other is worthy of marriage. Silvia decides to trade places with her servant, Lisette, so that she can observe Dorante’s true self. Unbeknownst to her, Dorante has the same idea and swaps places with his valet, Bourguignon. Though Silvia’s father, Orgon, is aware of both of their plans, he chooses to keep both Silvia and Dorante in the dark. Dorante and Silvia meet dressed as servants and fall in love despite their belief that the other is of a lower social standing. Similarly, Lisette and Bourguignon find love in each other expecting the other represents a more noble class. Ultimately all of their disguises are relinquished and the characters realize that they have in fact fallen for their intended counterpart.

Characters

Monsieur Orgon- A bourgeoisie gentleman who has betrothed his daughter, Silvia, to marry another member of the bourgeoisie, Dorante.

Mario- Monsieur Orgon’s son and Silvia’s brother who is aware of the plans of both Silvia and Dorante to pretend to be someone they are not.

Silvia- Monseur Orgon’s daughter who is engaged to Dorante. She takes on the identity of her maid, Lisette, to test her fiancé.

Dorante- a noble young man, engaged to Silvia, who decides to take on the identity of his servant Arlequino to test her.

Lisette- Silvia’s maid and friend who poses as Silvia.

Arlequino - Dorante’s valet, also known as Bourguignon, who poses as his master.
Theatrical Context

*Le Jeu de l’amour et du hasard*, or *The Game of Love and Chance*, is a timeless romantic comedy about assumed identity, the tyranny of social taboos and the ultimate triumph of true love. The play is characterized by "marivaudage", Pierre de Marivaux's clever wordplay and the unique speech used by his characters who tell the audience of their feelings of love (see Critical Exploration for more information). The play also considers social status and particularly its role in 18th century courtship and marriage. While playwright Marivaux effectively introduces the audience to an amusing and familiar group of characters.

Originally written in the 18th century, *The Game of Love and Chance* has been adapted and translated through several eras and performed all over the world. While mostly true to Marivaux's original script, this particular translation by Nicolas Billon has been written with a specific consideration of a modern audience.

Historical/Social Background

1. **About Pierre de Marivaux**

   www.dramatists.com

   Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux (February 4, 1688–February 12, 1763) was a French novelist and dramatist who is now considered to be one of the most important French playwrights of the eighteenth century. Throughout his career, Marivaux wrote between thirty and forty plays. Some of his best known works include: *Le Triomphe de l’amour*, *Surprise de l’amour*, *Les Fausses confidences*, *Le Legs* and, of course, *Le Jeu de l’amour et du hasard*. His comedies were originally performed in Paris at several theatres including the Comédie-Française and the Comédie-Italienne. In addition to his theatrical work, Marivaux also published a number of essays and two unfinished novels, *La Vie de Marianne* and *Le Paysan parvenu*.

   At various times, Marivaux shifted his attention to focus on journalism: a periodical publication called *L'Indigent Philosophe* appeared in 1727, and another called *Le Cabinet du Philosophe* in 1734. In 1731 Marivaux published the first two parts of his great novel, *La Vie de Marianne*. The eleven parts appeared at intervals over the next eleven years, but the novel was never finished. In 1735 he started work on another novel, *Le Paysan parvenu*, but this also was left unfinished.

   Marivaux was elected a member, or “immortel”, of the Académie Française in 1742. This organization has been the authority in creating a French literary standard and language since before the Revolution. For the next twenty years, he contributed occasionally to France’s major newspaper, *Mercure*, wrote plays, reflections, and other literary works.
2. History of The Game of Love and Chance

Around 1730, there were three theatres in Paris in addition to the Opera: The Comédie-Française or Théâtre-Français, the Comédie-Italienne or the Théâtre-Italien, and Théâtre de la Foire. Each theatre served a unique purpose and has its own history.

Marivaux’s plays were mostly performed at Comédie-Italienne. Originally, this theatre featured commedia dell’arte (see Critical Exploration section) performances in Italian by Italian actors. According to Encyclopedia Brittanica: “Italian commedia dell’arte companies appeared in France from the 16th century and pleased both the courtiers, who understood Italian, and the populace, which enjoyed the improvised antics, dialogue, and pantomime. In 1697, however, their satire was found offensive, and the companies were banished from France.” Once they were permitted reentry to France in 1716, the companies focused on the works of French playwrights, particularly Marivaux, who incorporated commedia elements.

There are several reasons Marivaux supposedly preferred his works to be performed at Comédie-Italienne. Marivaux valued the "brillante et abondante volubilité", or shining and abundant eloquence, of the Italian actors who performed there as well as their willingness to break French theatre traditions (Olmsted).

Though Marivaux did not consider The Game of Love and Chance to be one of his favourite works, it was his most popular and had great and immediate success.

3. About Nicolas Billon (translator)

Nicolas Billon is one of Canada’s foremost contemporary playwrights and the translator of this version of Marivaux’s original French text Le Jeu de l’amour et du hasard. Billon was raised in a francophone home but has committed to a theatre career almost entirely in English. This choice to write in English was part of a “non-competition clause” with his father, a French writer (Hassein, 2007). Billon brings a uniquely Canadian perspective to Marivaux’s text which effectively tells this complex story in a manner that resonates with a modern audience. According to Matthew Jocelyn, the show’s director, “the basic nature of the play...the style of comedy” remains consistent through the translation (Video: Behind the Scenes, 2011).

Biography (as provided by Nicolas Billon for in-house program):

When he was six, Nicolas wrote stories on index cards which he stapled together and sold to his mother for a tidy profit. Since then he’s written: The Elephant Song (Stratford 2004), The Measure of Love (Stratford 2005), Chekhov’s Three Sisters (Soulpepper 2007), Molière’s The Sicilian (2009 Toronto Fringe), Euripides’ Iphigenia at Aulis (SummerWorks2010), The Safe Word (SummerWorks 2011), and two episodes of CBC’s hit radio drama Afghanada. His play Greenland won the 2009 SummerWorks Audience Choice Award and the Outstanding Production Award, and later garnered an Overall Excellence Award for Playwriting at the New York Fringe Festival. Nicolas dislikes speaking in the third-person, but sometimes it can’t be helped.
Study Links

**English**
Explore the comedic value of banter and how the English language can be used in a *game* of wits. What literary techniques are used in *The Game of Love and Chance*? What do these techniques reveal about specific characters and what affect do they have on the play? How is the social status of a character recognizable through their choice of words? How might this have changed through translation from French to English?

**History**
Consider the situation in Paris and France around 1730 when Marivaux wrote his play. What social/political/cultural circumstances are referenced in this play? Given that the situation in Canada today is quite different, how is its historical context still relevant?

What kinds of courting and dating rituals and behaviours can we observe in the play? How has dating evolved through history? Why has it changed? Consider popular modern dating methods, such as online dating.

**Drama**
Characters adopting disguise on stage is a common theatrical device. What methods do the actors in *The Game of Love and Chance* use to communicate to the audience who they are and who they are pretending to be? How can you tell which expressions are the character themselves and which are the character they are pretending to be?

An *aside* is another common dramatic device that is utilized throughout *The Game of Love and Chance*. Why are these moments when characters address the audience necessary? What function do asides serve in unfolding Marivaux’s plot?

What are the characteristics associated with classical commedia dell’arte? What elements of *The Game of Love and Chance* categorize it as commedia? For example, which characters do you recognize?

What challenges face a modern director when adapting a classic play? Does the audience need to have an understanding of the original context to appreciate the performance?

**Sociology**
Canadian sociologist Erving Goffman studied human behaviour. He suggested that we “put on a mask” depending upon the social environment we are in and the people we are interacting with. Are there specific examples of how environment affects an individual’s habits within *The Game of Love and Chance*? Can you think of other examples in which you, or others, adapt behaviours based on surroundings? How comfortable do certain characters become with their assumed roles?
French
Marivaux was one of the foremost French writers of his time. The play has been translated, but what are the elements of the play that make it clear it was originally written in French for a French-speaking audience?

Science
Empirical evidence is data collected through unbiased study and an attempt to provide objective answers. How do the characters in the play use empirical evidence to figure out there is something amiss in their situation? Is their evidence at all empirical? How can you tell?

Anthropology
The events in The Game of Love and Chance are affected by the existence of a rigid hierarchy of social classes in early 18th century French society. How does this compare to social systems today?

Media and Popular Culture Studies
Examples of commedia dell’arte stock characters occur frequently in modern-day and popular media. Which character types may be found in The Simpsons, for example?
Critical Exploration

1. Commedia dell’Arte and Comedy of Manners

“Commedia dell’arte” was a form of comic drama developed in the mid-sixteenth century by guilds of professional Italian actors. These actors, playing stock characters, largely improvised the dialogue around a given scenario - a term that still denotes a brief outline of a drama, indicating merely the entrances of the main characters and the general course of the action. In a typical play, a pair of lovers outwit a rich old father, Pantalone, aided by a clever and intriguing servant, Arlequino, in a plot enlivened by the buffoonery of Punch and other clowns. Wandering Italian troupes played in all the large cities of Renaissance Europe and influenced various writers of comedies in Elizabethan England and, later, Molière in France. The twentieth-century puppet shows of Punch and Judy are descendants of this old Italian comedy.” (Abrams, 1993)

While the structure of his collection of plays strays from commedia conventions in some ways, Marivaux frequently borrows elements from this genre. For instance, Marivaux utilizes traditional commedia stock characters in several of his plays. Stock characters are “character types that occur repeatedly in a particular literary genre, and so are recognizable as part of the conventions of the form” (Abrams, 1993). In The Game of Love and Chance we see Arlequino, a comical servant character, and Lisette, whom Marivaux establishes throughout his cannon as a feisty servant. The young lovers, Silvia and Dorante, are also reflective of common commedia character types. Finally, Orgon, the father, has clear parallels to the Pantalone character, though he is kept in the know and never tricked. The translation mounted today presents highly modernized representations of these character models.

Another category of theatre that utilizes stock characters, and one that The Game of Love and Chance belongs to, is called comedy of manners. Originally from ancient Roman times, comedy of manners became popular in England during the Restoration period (c. 1660-1800). These plays used comedy to explore political issues of class and satirized behaviours associated with specific, and usually upper, social groups. The stories they told had to do with love going awry with complications always resolving themselves nicely. The Game of Love and Chance is a good example of a comedy of manners, as are Shakespeare’s Much Ado About Nothing and Oscar Wilde’s The Importance of Being Earnest.

2. Social Classes During Ancien Regime and The Regency

Pre-Revolution France was under ancien regime, or “old order”. According to Encyclopedia Brittanica, “under the regime, everyone was a subject of the king of France as well as a member of an estate and province...There was no national citizenship.” A significant aspect of society of the time was its firmly defined social classes: clergy, nobility or bourgeoisie, and the Third Estate or domestic servants which accounted for most of the population. Members of different social classes could be identified by behaviours such as how they dressed and spoke. Additionally, each social group was governed by a unique set of laws including policies concerning issues of land ownership and taxes. These clearly defined social positions affected all aspects of life at the time, including marriage.
Following the death of Louis XIV in 1715, the ancien regime ended and France began to change dramatically. The years between 1715 and 1723 are referred to as The Regency. During this time, Philippe d’Orléans, Louis XIV’s nephew, served as Regent for the new ruler, King Louis XV, who was only five years old when he inherited the throne. The Regency years mark the beginning of noticeable changes in societal structures due to a variety of factors including newly enforced economic policies. Ultimately, the result of these changes was opportunity for financial gain among bourgeoisies and even servant classes. While bourgeoisies engaged in international business to earn significant wealth, servants were able to save sums of money as they received room and board from their masters. Furthermore, some servants even gave loans to and earned interest from more wealthy individuals. Suddenly, people were able to acquire wardrobes formerly reserved for the higher classes and began to present themselves in a way that made it difficult to decipher who belonged to which social group. The division of classes was blurring and society was beginning to reorganize.

Marivaux’s Le Jeu de L’amour et du hasard was naturally influenced by the circumstances of his time. Although class systems are much different today than in ancien regime, we can still recognize distinct silos in current society based on variables such as where people live and socio-economic status. It is necessary to consider this in order to appreciate the relevance of Marivaux’s cultural influences to a modern Canadian audience.

3. Use of Mask

“Give a man a mask and you discover his true character.”
Oscar Wilde

The mask, both literally and figuratively, is at the epicentre of this script. The Game of Love and Chance “revolves around an examination of the disparity between l’Être and le paraître, or who an individual actually is versus who he or she appears to be in the theater of society.” (Wyngaard) An effective dramatic tool today, the mask has played a significant role in European history beyond the stage.

Carnival is a celebration during the period between St. Stephen’s Day, December 26, and Ash Wednesday, dating back to the 12th century. Traditionally it was a time of festivities immediately preceding Lent and Easter. This timing is significant since the public would adopt strict religious behaviours following Carnival. The word ‘carnival’ is believed to be derived from the Latin phrase “carneme levare” meaning “to avoid meat”, alluding to one of the restrictions of this religious time. An important element of the Carnival traditions was the ritual of wearing masks, which allowed people to act in a way that was otherwise considered reprehensible. In fact, people were known to act in such an immoral and out of control manner that it was illegal to carry weapons while you were in a mask.

In the early 18th century, masked balls became common in France. Beginning in 1713, the Opera in Paris began to host masquerades several times a week. These balls were so trendy that the Comedie Francaise started to host their own events three years later. The popularity of masked events may be attributed to the fact that they “afforded individuals much-needed moments of social, sexual, and
psychological liberty. Most importantly, by dispensing with artificial barriers and constraints, these masquerades provided a formal framework for individuals of different classes, sexes, and ages to commingle. The switching of roles and class reversals had the effect of temporarily unifying participants by leveling any social disparities that existed between them.” (Wyngaard)

*The Game of Love and Chance* is one of many artistic works that employs the motif of mistaken identities and disguise. A concise list of other classical works in which these themes are prominent includes:

Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing* (1599)

Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* (1602)

Molière’s *Amphitryon* (1688)

Goldoni’s *Harlequin, Servant of Two Masters* (1743)

Rostand’s *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1897)

Mozart’s comic opera *The Marriage of Figaro* (1786)

4. Marivaudage

Marivaudage is the style of language that Marivaux uses. It is characterized by:

- Word play and witty banter
- The exploration of love and romance in characters’ dialogue
- Giving voice to character’s inner feelings
- Exposing a character’s social class through their language

Marivaudage is a key element that made Marivaux’s plays stand out to French audiences of his time. His unique way with words is also integral to the continuing popularity of his works today. Marivaudage is prominent in *Le Jeu de l’amour et du hasard*. By allowing the audience to access the characters’ inner thoughts, while utilizing vocabulary and rhythms that emphasize their accepted societal status, the audience experiences a holistic perspective of each player. Furthermore, this technique allows a potentially confusing tale to have frequent comedic moments.

Clearly, there are significant differences between the French and English language. According to director Matthew Jocelyn, “translating Marivaux into English is a really perilous exercise. What remains the same is the basic nature of the play” (Video: Behind the Scenes, 2011). Nicolas Billon works to recreate Marivaux’s style as accurately as possible in his translation through deliberate word choices that continued to be revised within the rehearsal process.

An example of Marivaudage from Canadian Stage’s translation is in Act 1 Scene 6 when Dorante says,
"And yet your little request comprises two impossible clauses" in response to Silvia’s suggestion of leaving love alone and just remaining good friends. The composition of his reaction is reflective of Dorante’s high social status, and not consistent with the valet he is portraying. This line demonstrates Marivaux’s strong sense of decorum and understanding that language can exhibit one’s social class. Despite the fact that Dorante thinks Silvia is a maid, he sees Silvia’s inner properness immediately which is an important part of what attracts him to her. Silvia is attracted to Dorante for the same reason, but does not recognize it. This specific phrase is relevant in understanding Marivaudage since it also reminds the audience of the amusing truth of who Dorante is while still keeping Silvia in the dark.

Recently Nicolas Billon spoke to Suzanne Shugar about his experience translating Marivaux’s text for the Canadian Stage co-production of *The Game of Love and Chance* with the Centaur Theatre in Montreal. Suzanne Shugar is a Montreal journalist, broadcaster and Centaur Theatre’s PR and Web Writer. In this interview Shugar asks Billon about the language Marivaux utilized.

SS: The French term marivaudage describes Marivaux’s highly stylized dialogue. What other unique complexities did the play present?

NB: It’s amazing how difficult Marivaux’s language is to translate. This is in part because the dialogue often contains several layers of meaning and, unfortunately, that kind of “colouring” often gets diluted in translation. Marivaux also enjoyed using long sentences with clause after clause after clause. French is a language where you can get away with that, but in English... well, it’s both exhausting to listen to and, more significantly, it knocks the funny right out. So one of Matthew’s first recommendations— and an excellent one— was to keep the sentences short and punchy. Dealing with the various levels of language also presented its own special challenge. Not only are the characters from different social backgrounds, but they’re pretending to be someone of a higher/lower class. Arlequino was the trickiest because it’s a delicate balance to find the right rhythm for a servant-pretending-to-speak-like-a-noble-butnot-quite-succeeding.

### 5. The Ritual of Courting/Dating

Courting and dating rituals are unique to specific cultures, places and times. Behaviours that are common in some societies can be interpreted as shocking to others. While the arranged nature of Dorante and Silvia’s engagement may seem antiquated or be totally foreign to many audience members, it is reflective of an ancient tradition that is still popular in some parts of the world and even still practiced in North America.

The practice of arranged marriage, a union that is decided upon by parties other than the individuals to be wed, dates as far back as biblical times. The tradition has political, social and military roots. Today, arranged marriage is mostly seen in Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Japan, India, Bangladesh and some Muslim/Islam countries. In modern tradition, the potential bride and groom are usually allowed to meet
prior to their marriage and are given the opportunity to refuse their match. They may be introduced by parents or other relatives, friends and sometimes even matchmakers. Arranged marriage is different from forced marriage in which individuals are married without consent or against their will. These unique terms are often confused. Regardless of the distinction, there are still those who are strongly opposed to arranged marriage.

It is also interesting to consider the modern tradition of online dating. Today, online dating has become a popular practice by which people meet potential spouses. Online daters screen profiles of “matches” and decide whether or not to initiate a conversation, meet in person and even begin a relationship or wed. In many ways, Dorante and Silvia’s experiences in The Game of Love and Chance are comparable. In Marivaux’s play, Dorante and Silvia each screen their proposed match from behind a mask, today’s dater is able to do so from behind a computer.

Pre-Show Activities

AIM: To introduce to and familiarise students with some ideas central to the play, such as status, Commedia Dell’Arte, and mask.

1. Playing Status

Divide students into pairs. One student starts improvising a scene by offering a phrase that clearly establishes his/her status in relation to the other, either higher or lower. Students should consider all elements available to them in order to establish status (tone of voice, space, physicality, eye contact, etc.). The second student must accept the status s/he is given and maintain that status level throughout the scene.

2. Status Tug-of-war

Divide students into pairs. One partner starts improvising a scene through an opening phrase which clearly establishes his/her status in relation to the other, as in the exercise above. This time, however, the second student should attempt to change the status s/he is endowed with. Continue playing with shifting status to see who can establish and maintain a higher status throughout the scene. Set a time limit for the scene in order to raise the stakes - the player with the higher status at the end is the winner!
3. **Commedia Dell’Arte**

Research the following commedia dell’arte stock characters: Arlequino, Columbina, Pantalone, and the Lovers. Familiarise yourself with their status (master or servant?), vocal qualities, dialogue, movement, stance, gesture, and their function in the plot of a commedia scene.

Improvise a scene involving Arlequino, Columbina, Pantalone, and the Lovers. What conflicts do you predict will arise between these four characters?

4. **Mask**

   - *Attitudes and “isms”*

What drives our behaviour? Why do we act in certain ways in certain situations? Why is your response to a particular event different to someone else’s? Consider a variety of different attitudes that you see operating within your world. Devise a list of as many of these attitudes as you can (optimist, materialist, perfectionist, sceptic etc). In pairs, improvise a scene between two former friends who have not seen each other in a while. Player A and B each assume a dominant attitude from the list you devised together. E.g. optimist, materialist, perfectionist, skeptic, etc. Play out the scene.

Discuss:

   - How do we arrive at our philosophies about the world?
   - What effect does this way of seeing the world have on our relationships with others?
   - How does the mask of an attitude relate to the truth of who we really are?

   - *“Masks” and “Faces”*

On chart paper, write the word “mask” in the centre and mind-map around it. Ask – what do we mean by the word “mask” and what associations seems to be connected with it? Flip over the paper, write the word “face” in the centre and mind-map around this word. Compare the meanings of the two words.

5. **The Play in sixty seconds.**

Read the synopsis of *The Game of Love and Chance* provided in this study guide. Consider the four Commedia characters: Arlecchino, Columbina, and the Lovers. Using tableau, movement and specific words or phrases from the synopsis, devise a sixty-second performance of the plot. Consider incorporating one costume piece or prop for each character, to assist with the notion of mistaken identity.
Post-Show Activities

AIM: To explore ideas of status, love, power and identity in the world of the play, and in our own world.

1. Post Performance Thinking Starts...

*The Four R’s*

Reinforce – what ideas, thoughts, conclusions, have been reinforced by this production?

Rethink – what aspects of theatre has this production made you rethink?

Reflect – what thoughts and ideas has this production stimulated? What are you now wondering about?

Reject – what are the aspects of this production that didn’t work? What do you not agree with?

2. The Opinion Line

After seeing the production, consider your response to the statements below. Find an appropriate place in a line with your classmates, with one end of the line being “Strongly Agree” and the other “Strongly Disagree”. Each person should explain why they have chosen to stand at that particular point in line.

*If there were no class system in society, we would all be equal.*

*The brain always wins over the heart.*

*Love is blind.*

3. Symbol and Status

To what extent do you feel the world of the play is a world in which inequities are encouraged? Does this world promote confining people to play a particular, immovable role? Consider different symbols for someone of a high status and someone of a low status, and how you might represent these two ideas on stage.
AIM: To develop skills in performing and evaluating character performance in *The Game of Love and Chance*.

4. **Post Performance Reflection**

List the different characters in the play. How would you boil each character down to his or her ‘character juice’? (ie: one trait which defines them?) How did the actors embody the different characters? (physically? vocally?). Which performance did you enjoy most? Why? In your discussion, consider: characterisation, costume, voice, gesture, physical exaggeration.

5. **Keeping Up Appearances and Playing Games**

In *The Game of Love and Chance*, the characters’ conflicts and desires are made known to the audience. Marivaux often employs dramatic irony to help shape the dramatic tension of the play.

- To what extent you think Silvia, Dorante, Lisette and Arlequino are bound by their status?
- How do they try to keep up the pretence of socially appropriate behaviour?
- To what extent does this desire drive the action or conflict of the play?
- What are the different ‘games’ that each character plays, willingly or unwillingly, throughout the play in order to keep up appearances of socially appropriate behaviour?
- What are the ‘rules’ they must follow?

Consider this idea of ‘game playing’ as a devising tool. In fours, develop a short scene involving two servants and two masters entitled ‘The Rules of the Game.’ Play with the idea of blurring the lines between game-playing and courtship.

6. **Style & Performance**

Rhythm and pace are very important when delivering Marivaux’s dialogue. The vocal tempo is often rapid and precise, demanding clear articulation, pronunciation, and excellent vocal control.

With a partner, read through the excerpt below. Practise a rapid delivery, a varied vocal inflection, and an extremely precise articulation. Perform the excerpt in an entirely presentational manner. (presentational = the style of performance that is delivered directly to the audience; a non-realistic device). To enhance vocal rhythm, practise these speeches by improvising a melody and singing them. Try to create a light, happy and rapid melody. To enhance timing and cuing, repeat the same speeches whilst tossing a tennis ball between you and your partner as you say the last word of each speech.
Now, prepare a realistic performance of this scene. Consider performance choices you can make in order to reinforce the *believability* of your character; how can you change your performance so that it reads *true to life*? What is the effect of each performance style on you as an actor? As an audience member? Are you able to achieve believability without compromising a heightened performance style?

**ACT I**

**Scene I**

**SILVIA**

For the last time -- mind your own business! Who gave you the right to speak for my feelings?

**LISETTE**

I assumed your feelings would be the same as anyone else’s. Your father asks me if you’re pleased with the marriage he’s arranged for you. Does it make you happy? I answer, “Of course it does!” But perhaps you’re the only woman in the entire world for whom that "of course" isn’t true?

**SILVIA**

"Of course it does”? “Of course”? How ridiculously naive! Do you really think marriage is a synonym for happiness?

**LISETTE**

Of course I do. As a matter of fact.

**SILVIA**

Shut up, you impertinent girl! You have a lot of nerve, judging my heart’s desires by your own.

**LISETTE**

My heart desires the same thing as everyone else’s. What exactly makes yours so special?

**SILVIA**

I swear, one day you’ll go so far as to call me a snob.

**LISETTE**

If I were your equal, I just might.
SILVIA
Are you upsetting me on purpose, Lisette?

LISETTE
That wasn’t my intention. Now come on, tell me: why was I wrong to tell your father you’re happy to get married?

SILVIA
Because first of all, it isn’t true. I rather enjoy being sans husband.

LISETTE
Sans husband? We’ll see how long that lasts.

Works Cited


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