

Tom Mackan
Director
"The Imaginary Invalid"

Some Closing Night Remarks

Saturday, February 18, 2012

We all owe Michelle a mighty debt for her steady hand on the wheel guiding the whole voyage and its crew safely to this night, to this warm and fine moment when we feel like champions. Dani has given us a first class vessel in which to sail, as fine a baroque barque as ever there was. Michelle brought us John, and Stan, and their skilled helpers to put it together, and Enid to lead the painting and detailing. She recruited Trisha to design the life-giving lighting that enfolded the whole in rich moments of feeling and effect. We owe her again for her soundscape that brought exquisite moments of both life and emotion to the flow of the action on-going in the play. She contributed her own mother, Marie, to make up our actors and bring order out of the chaos of the make-up department. I remember how pleased she was when she got Nyn Draper to take on the tedious business of properties, as devoted a worker as you'd want, and who seldom came out to take a bow. I have to admit having some hand in finding Kevin to plunge into the dangerous waters of Stage-Managing, a brave and heroic achievement. Whatever theatre god sent us Matt Dafoe to handle things backstage needs eternal praise. He and Kevin together give the word crew a deep and lasting meaning way beyond any dictionary. And Anna Marie! If belief in angels will get me anywhere, I believe in Anna Marie... out of her pure heart and my good luck did she come along when needed. Gaudeamus igitur, let us rejoice therefore in her musical take-charge self, so grateful we must be to her. And Graham will never believe us, but I can assure him that he didn't get the role of Argan just because he brought Linda to the table. No. Not at all, Graham. But thank you anyway. Such a book-holder any company must have. Allow me a personal thank you to John Bandler for his faithful observance of our work and his photography thereof.

Ariel. Ariel, a name engraved on our escutcheon of success. Let us confess, Michelle and I, to some behind the scenes high-fiving when our seductions worked and Ariel Rogers agreed to take on the work of costuming this play in authentic 17th century French style. No Ariel? Unthinkable. We have forever enslaved ourselves to her debt for not only agreeing to do our costumes, but to doing them with such incomparable excellence. Never did we dare to hope for such success. Simply brilliant work and she brought so much talent in hair styles too. Her professional confidence and dry no-nonsense attitude brought us backstage professionalism not to be equaled. Ave, Ariel. Vivat, vivat.

Take all this then and knit into the fabric a cast of actors with credentials from here to eternity. Carrying the mighty tour de force of Argan fell to my dear friend and many times hero, Graham Clements. We don't admit to pre-casting, do we, but only two actors came to mind when the casting began, Jeremy Irons and Graham Clements. We know how lucky our production is, don't we, that Irons declined. Thank you, Graham.

You can only imagine my pleasure when among all the fine actors who read for Toinette, did appear Moe Dwyer. Such talent one can only pray for, and within seconds of her first reading, we knew whom we wanted. We rushed to the phone and told Judy Dench that we wouldn't be needing her. Your Toinette, my dear Moe, was not only a masterpiece of skilled comedy in art, but the match for Graham was perfection itself.

I knew an actor I wanted to read for Angelique when I first saw her in a Dundas production of "I'll Be Back Before Midnight". Natalie Ruginis, your appearance alone would win you the role, your porcelain beauty disguising a stage energy of rare excellence. To have cast you and to have found you so malleable in direction must go down in my book of special achievements.

Carla. How little we knew of you and how thankful we are that you took the role of Beline and ran with it in high comic style! Your theatrical ethic paid off in such high returns, and as your director I know what a devoted artist you are. Now does the whole community know, too. May I take credit for having introduced you to our community of fine actors.

Dave. The Dave Powers of such high repute, yes. I've known your work for so many years, and we've had a kind of mutual admiration thing going on behind Anna Marie's back, haven't we. When you indicated a desire to read, and when you worked so diligently around The Angries to fit into our play, I knew we had a Bonnefoy to our everlasting Credit. Thank you, Dave.

Les. I've had you in my sights for a long time as a performer, and wouldn't the fates bring us together not once this season, but four times! And each time you're a perfect fit for the role, and your Diaforus no exception. Thanks for so much attention to detail and perfection, Les, you are an example to treasure.

Ryan Trepanier pimped himself shamelessly, I must proudly tell you all, for this role, little knowing that he was probably hands-down likely to get it. Ryan, your natural and personal energy and good spirits came through with gratifying success, wed incredibly to the acting skills needed to turn a fine wit into a "gormless" nerd. Moliere must have known you in another life, when he wrote this role.

Kassie Benoit, what a joy it's been to watch an actor actually grow as an artist before our very eyes. You've taken this role of Louise and through whole-hearted acceptance of direction and of the help from Graham and Carla, given us a precious jewel of a performance, one I wait each night to see. Thank you, Kassie. And thank you Kassie's mom, too.

Strong presence, big voice, sensible as foil to foolishness, experienced, stage-wise, good size.. enter into the data base for Beralde and lo, Will Armstrong! And sure enough, Will achieves the role with credit to spare. Thanks for your dry comedy skills, for your taking direction, for keeping up pace and for winning us over to Argan's fine, upstanding brother, Thanks you Will.

Kyla, Kyla, Kyla... I'm so proud of having you in the tiny role of Apothecary, and taking on the challenge of it with such seasoned skill and artistry. When I saw your great comic performance as Rumpel, Kyla,

and when the opportunity arose to re-cast the part of Apothecary, well, the rest is history. So many thanks, so much we owe you.

Peter Hawley, I have endless admiration for your growth as an actor since you first turned out to help us in Copenhagen. In Code you took a speaking part with a serious desire to work the stage and it so worked for you. Then for Waterdown, another important role, and now your character skills put to work so effectively as Dr. Purgon. I am one very pleased admirer, Sir.

Finally. This production of "The Imaginary Invalid", its adaptation by Milles Malleson, that we've just brought to ripe fruition this month, is the offspring of a youthful affair I had with Moliere's masterpiece when I played Cleante as a young man in the 1950s and very much the same age as our own Cleante, Duncan, is now. It happens in our experience often, that some otherwise unlikely event nourishes a seed that refuses to wither and die. I honestly think that I found my actor's feet in that role in that production, and I saw my acting self as others saw me. It was a WODL Festival and the adjudicator, whose name I've long forgotten, singled my performance out as worthy of a nomination. I didn't win the prize then, but it didn't matter. I was recognized by my peers as an actor. A seminal moment from which sprang an avocation that has never failed me, even when I, on occasion, failed it. You see, Moliere and Cleante gave me courage, and whether praised or pilloried, I simply knew it wouldn't matter, only the play and the playing of it counted, whatever the outcome.

"Invalid" matters to me, my friends and colleagues. It is the little pilot light that is too small and distant to burn bright at all, it doesn't provide heat or energy, but my dears, it never goes out. Duncan, I won't come back to this, so don't be embarrassed but the moment in rehearsal when you found your Cleante, gave me a huge charge, because that tiny flame surged and I was young again and knew my life in Community Theatre kicks some ass still. You played the role in this production way better than I ever did. You have already the skilled and seasoned confidence of a true performer...and I thank you especially for being Cleante this season. Here's a confession, Duncan. I thought by getting you as Cleante, I'd be more certain of getting Natalie as Angelique. Well, my good sir, you did more than that, you are my piece de resistance and I Thank you.

And thank you all. Hic nos sumus, non est disputandum. Quod erat demonstrandum.