

Valmont

1. Classical piece

***Don Juan* by Molière**

DON JUAN:

Constancy is fit only for fools. All beautiful women have the right to enchant us, and the privilege of being first should not deprive the rest of their fair claim upon our hearts.

For my part, beauty delights me wherever I find it, and I surrender my heart to every charming object that asks for it. When once I have paid my homage, I owe nothing further. The inclination which draws us toward a fair woman is honourable and natural. To refuse it is to insult nature itself.

What injustice there would be in shutting up one's affection within a single attachment and depriving all others of the tribute they deserve. No, constancy is only good for ridiculous people. All beauties have the same rights over us, and I give myself up to each in turn without offense to any.

To confine love to one object is to be dead to the rest of the world, and I cannot believe nature intended us for such narrow conduct.

2. Contemporary piece

People pretend love is simple because the truth frightens them. They say honesty matters, but they don't want it. They want comfort.

I think love is choosing to look properly at someone. Seeing them clearly, without polishing the edges. Most people can't bear that kind of attention. It feels like judgment, even when it's desire. I'm not cruel. I'm precise. I don't lie to make things easier. I tell the truth because it changes things. Because once it's spoken, you can't go back to pretending.

That's what intimacy is. Not safety. Exposure. And if you don't want that, you shouldn't ask to be loved.

Merteuil

1. Classical piece

***The Misanthrope* by Molière**

CÉLIMÈNE:

I cannot help it if people amuse me. One must laugh at something in this world, and folly offers itself so generously.

Look at them all. One believes himself profound because he never speaks. Another talks endlessly and says nothing. This one adopts opinions as others adopt fashions, changing them whenever the wind turns. That one thinks gravity is wisdom and dullness a virtue.

They wish to be admired without effort, praised without merit, loved without charm. And yet they are wounded when one sees them clearly.

For my part, I confess it freely. I observe. I remember. And when people make themselves ridiculous, they should not complain if someone notices.

2. Contemporary piece

I don't ask for much. I ask for what is fair. The trouble is that fairness frightens people who have grown comfortable taking more than their share.

You mistake me for someone driven by feeling. I'm not. I see how things work, and I refuse to pretend otherwise. I've watched men call their greed ambition and their fear principle, and I've learned from them very well.

You think I'm hard because I don't cry when the rules fail me. But I didn't make the rules. I only stopped apologizing for understanding them.

And if that costs me your approval, I can afford it.

Tourvel

1. Classical piece

***Measure for Measure* by William Shakespeare**

ISABELLA:

Alas, alas!

Why, all the souls that were forfeit once,
And He that might the vantage best have took
Found out the remedy.

How would you be,
If He, which is the top of judgment, should
But judge you as you are? O, think on that,
And mercy then will breathe within your lips,
Like man new made.

Why, you are nothing then. Neither your power nor your place
Can with such justice shield you from the consequences
Of your own severity.

Go to your bosom.

Knock there, and ask your heart what it doth know

That's like my brother's fault. If it confess

A natural guiltiness such as is his,

Let it not sound a thought upon your tongue

Against my brother's life.

2. Contemporary piece

I have tried to live by what I know is right, even when it made my life smaller. I have kept my word when silence would have protected me.

You ask why I won't bend, as though bending were harmless. But I know what happens when you allow one small lie to stand in for peace. It grows. It asks for more.

I am not proud. I am afraid. But I would rather be afraid than false.

If I must lose what I love because I tell the truth, then that loss will at least belong to me.

Cecile

1. Classical piece

***The Tempest* by William Shakespeare**

MIRANDA:

O wonder!

How many goodly creatures are there here!

How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world,

That has such people in't!

I am amazed beyond my patience.

I never saw so many pleasant shapes,

So many kind faces. Surely these are noble beings.

I could gaze upon them forever,

For there is something in them that draws my heart forward,

Though I do not yet know why.

2. Contemporary piece

I don't think things are simple just because they look tidy. I think people arrange the world, so it won't frighten them, and then they call it order.

But when I ask questions, I'm not trying to be difficult. I want to understand why feelings behave differently from rules, why you can do everything correctly and still cause harm.

I don't believe knowledge ruins things. I think it makes them larger. And I would rather be confused and learning than safe and ignorant.

If that means I step into something before I'm ready, then at least it will be my step.

Danceney

Yes. Danceney is lyricism without armor. He feels first, thinks second, and believes love should be beautiful simply because it is felt. For *Liaisons*, he must be sincere without being dull, ardent without being foolish.

Here are two pieces, shaped in the same way as the others.

1. Classical piece

***Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare**

ROMEO:

Love is a smoke raised with the fume of sighs;
Being purged, a fire sparkling in lovers' eyes;
Being vexed, a sea nourished with loving tears.
What is it else? A madness most discreet,
A choking gall, and a preserving sweet.
Why then, O brawling love, O loving hate,
O anything, of nothing first create!
Here's much to do with hate, but more with love.
Why then, O love, O all! O heavy lightness,
Serious vanity, misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms!
Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health,
Still-waking sleep, that is not what it is!

2. Contemporary piece

I know I sound foolish when I speak like this, but I can't help believing that words matter, that the way we name things changes how we love them.

When I listen to you, I feel as though the world is larger than I was taught. As though there are places inside me I've never entered before, and now they're opening.

I don't want to conquer anything. I want to understand it. To belong to it without taking it apart. If that makes me weak, then it's a weakness I'm willing to keep.

Volanges/Rosemonde

1. Classical piece

***The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde**

LADY BRACKNELL:

Never speak disrespectfully of Society, Algernon. Only people who can't get into it do that. The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound. Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever.

A girl brought up carefully will always know when to say nothing. That, after all, is the true object of education.

I do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit. Touch it, and the bloom is gone.

2. Contemporary piece

I don't enjoy suspicion. I rely on it. The world does not reward the unwatchful.

People say trust is a virtue, as though it were harmless. But trust without vigilance is how harm enters quietly, wearing a familiar face.

You may call me severe. I call myself responsible. Someone must be willing to stand apart, to see clearly, even when clarity is unpopular.

If I am wrong, I will answer for it. But if I am right and remain silent, the cost is too great to bear.