

Le Médecins Malgré Lui

Le Médecin Malgré Lui in North America

MAY 4, 2015 HARRY

In recent decades, the majority of performances of *Médecin* outside France have taken place in educational institutions, so the North American phenomenon of the high school yearbook gives the documentation of its stage history a historical depth not available elsewhere. The play has been on American campuses since at least 1915, usually in translation and entitled *The Doctor in Spite of Himself*, but for photographic evidence that, in the opening scene, Sganarelle's blows were targeted specifically at his wife's bottom, we have to wait until 1942, when, in the junior play at Washington High School in East Chicago, Indiana, Eugene Tepper did this to Betty Rosenberry:



And the earliest rendition I've found that was a spanking in the most precise sense of the term was at McMurray College, Texas, in 1953, starring Sheridan Mallott and Jan Jackson:



At Thornton Fractional North High School in Calumet City Illinois, the fall of 1957 saw this happen to Helene Bernick at the hands of John Gross:



But the play's bumper decade, as far as spanking goes, was the 1960s:



(Raymond Brandon whacks Susan Jacques at Hayward High School, California, in the school year 1959-60)



(Adele Gordon is on the receiving end of harsh treatment from Stephen Schaffran at El Cerrito High School, California, in the school year 1960-61)



('Yeow!' says Phyllis Fandrick as Scott Kliment punishes her in the 1962 spring play at Lincoln High School, Manitowoc, Wisconsin)



(Mariel Seefeldt bends over for Ralph Albrecht at Kewaskum High School, Wisconsin, in the school year 1962-63)



(It's a spanking at Butler High School, Vandalia, Ohio, on the nights of February 5 and 6, 1965 – but we don't know the names of the participants!)



(Thwack! goes the stick across the bottom of Sophie Bertha at Chaplain Kapaun Memorial High School, Wichita, Kansas, in the school year 1965-66; Howard Uhrich does the honors)



(Charles Averill administers an outdoor rehearsal spanking to Susie Monger, somewhere in the vicinity of the Will Rogers High School, Tulsa, Oklahoma, where The Doctor in Spite of Himself was the junior play for the school year 1965-66)



(Carolyn Cobb is saved from the attentions of wild-eyed Weldon Carmicheal at Mulvane High School, Kansas, in the school year 1966-67)



GETTING TO THE MEAT of the problem of a troublesome spouse is Terry Burns of Fresno County, in "Sparkle," of the Fresno State College drama department. "A Doctor Is Spine of Himself," Sparkle's paragon is a genuine "Sparkle," the target, Vito Marini, is portrayed by Theodore Hall of Fresno.

(At Fresno State College in 1968, Candace Holt gets her bottom burnt by Terry Burns, and gets herself into the newspapers too!)



(Only a spanking can settle down Elaine Keefe, or so John Burrow believes; the production was at Mount Pleasant High School, Iowa, in the school year 1969-70)

And finally, of unknown date but similar vintage, here's Bruno Zovich spanking Eileen Menchini at Lemoyne College, Syracuse, New York:



And in 1971, the Kansas-based K-State Continental Theatre Company toured with a musical adaptation of the play, from which we have a blurry newspaper photo of the spanking:



Another musical adaptation, by John Jakes, followed in 1973, under the title *Doctor, Doctor!* This premiered on July 20 in a production by the Dayton Theatre Guild, Ohio, with Ken Hardin as Sganarelle and Harriet Beaman as Martine. And in this version, the stage direction is explicit:

He seizes her, sits on bench, turns her over his knee and spanks her. Martine yells.

Here's an example of a school production of *Doctor, Doctor!*, from Tracy High School, Minnesota, in the 1979 spring musical. Brian Flesner is spanking Lisa Pommler:



The play proper held its popularity with schools through the 1970s and '80s before tailing off towards the end of the century, but yearbooks tended to illustrate it with other scenes. One exception that perhaps explains why is the 1993-4 production at Sterling High School, Kansas, in which Ben Mattson spanked Misha Thompson...



and the yearbook editors, reflecting the shift of taste since the 1960s, chose to headline the picture 'Abused'.

But whether it's abuse or slapstick (or both), the tradition continues, and in 2009, at Tidewater Community College in Virginia, Krys Wrenn put Amanda Gall across his knee.



To finish off, here are some videos. First, two from 2012.