

# National Theatre Collection

## *London Assurance* – Learning Pack

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## About

This learning pack supports the National Theatre's production of *London Assurance*, directed by Nicholas Hytner, which opened on 11th March 2010 at the National's Olivier Theatre in London.

Our packs are designed to support viewing the recording on the **National Theatre Collection**. This pack provides links to the UK school curriculum and other productions in the Collection. It also has a plot synopsis with timecodes to allow you to jump to specific sections of the play.

## **Background Information**

Recording Date – 28th June, 2010

Location – Olivier Theatre, National Theatre

Age Recommendation – 12+

## **Cast**

<b>Cool</b> .....	Nick Sampson
<b>Martin</b> .....	Richard Frame
<b>Charles Courtly</b> .....	Paul Ready
<b>Richard Dazzle</b> .....	Matt Cross
<b>Sir Harcourt Courtly</b> .....	Simon Russell Beale
<b>Squire Max Harkaway</b> .....	Mark Addy
<b>Pert</b> .....	Maggie Service
<b>James</b> .....	Simon Markey
<b>Grace Harkaway</b> .....	Michelle Terry
<b>Mark Meddle</b> .....	Tony Jayawardena
<b>Lady Gay Spanker</b> .....	Fiona Shaw
<b>Mr Adolphus Spanker</b> .....	Richard Briers
<b>Mr Solomon Isaacs</b> .....	Junix Inocian
<b>Doctor</b> .....	David Whitworth
<b>Servant</b> .....	Mark Extance
<b>Servant</b> .....	Prasanna Puwanarajah
<b>Doctor's daughter</b> .....	Fiona Drummond
<b>Doctor's daughter</b> .....	Laura Matthews

## **Musicians**

<b>Music Director / Accordion</b> .....	Ian Watson
<b>Fiddle</b> .....	Sophie Solomon
<b>Double Bass / Tuba</b> .....	David Berry

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## Creative Team

<b>Director</b> .....	Nicholas Hytner
<b>Designer</b> .....	Mark Thompson
<b>Music</b> .....	Rachel Portman
<b>Sound Designer</b> .....	John Leonard
<b>Lighting Designer</b> .....	Neil Austin
<b>Textual Revisions</b> .....	Richard Bean
<b>Choreographer</b> .....	Scarlett Mackmin

## Teaching Information

**This production is particularly suitable for:**

- Students studying **19th century comedy**.
- **Drama and theatre** students studying Nicholas Hytner as a contemporary practitioner.
- Students with a particular interest in **set and costume design**.

**In particular you might like to explore:**

- How the actors' costumes help them to create their characters.
- How movement and voice work contribute to the comic action of the play.
- Nicholas Hytner's practice as a director here and how it compares to his other work, including other comedies such as *One Man, Two Guvnors*.

## Plot Synopsis

*This version contains some textual revisions from Richard Bean, and minor cuts.*

*London Assurance takes place over 3 days in London and Gloucestershire in 1841. The play is split into 6 Acts.*

### **Act I (Sir Harcourt Courtly's house in Belgrave Square, London):**

Charles Courtly and Richard Dazzle arrive at Sir Harcourt's London home after a night on the town and manage to avoid Harcourt with the butler Cool's help; the highly eccentric Harcourt still believes that Charles is a clean-living young man.

**(0:08:40)** Max arrives to make the final arrangements for Harcourt's marriage to Max's 18 year old niece Grace. Max has made Grace's inheritance contingent on her marrying Harcourt; if she does not, it will pass to Charles. In return, Harcourt has helped him financially.

**(0:14:20)** Harcourt leaves and Dazzle bumps into Max, gaining himself an invitation to Oak Hall in Gloucestershire - Max's country house - and Charles will accompany him on the trip.

**Act II (The lawn before Oak Hall, a fine Elizabethan mansion in the countryside) 0:20:45:** At Oak Hall, Grace and her maid Pert discuss her upcoming marriage to the aged Sir Harcourt. Grace is dismissive of love, and explains she will be content to have a rich husband who is often away.

**(0:24:56)** A lawyer, Mark Meddle, arrives who is drawing out the deeds for the wedding. Charles and Dazzle arrive, with Charles pretending to be a man named Augustus Hamilton. Charles does not know of his father's marriage plans and immediately starts courting Grace.



## Plot Synopsis



### **Act III (Two days later, inside the mansion in the late afternoon)**

**0:42:24:** Grace and Charles/Augustus play games and flirt, irritating Sir Hardcourt. Grace begins to fall in love with Charles in spite of herself.

**(0:46:36)** The enigmatic Lady Gay Spanker and her elderly war veteran husband "Dolly" arrive, and Sir Harcourt immediately falls in love with the Lady. Charles and Dazzle hatch a plan to encourage Hardcourt to pursue Lady Gay to undermine his marriage to Grace.

**(1:08:08)** When Lady Gay interrupts Charles and Grace's courtship, Charles easily persuades the Lady to distract Sir Harcourt from marriage to Grace by apparently accepting his affections.

### **Interval**

## Plot Synopsis



**Act IV (Later that evening) 1:12:09:** Charles leaves as 'Augustus', returning as Charles to tell Grace that 'Augustus' has been killed, to see if she really loves him.

**(1:25:30)** Some young ladies arrive and they dance. Sir Hardcourt begins courting Lady Gay and they agree to elope. The lawyer Meddle overhears them and plots to bring adultery charges against Lady Gay and Hardcourt. Lady Gay tells Charles to convince Grace to elope as well, as part of the plan.

**Act V (Outside the house) 1:39:05:** Sir Hardcourt prepares for his elopement, giving instructions to Cool of his trip to meet in Boulogne. Lady Gay delays them leaving, calling out and alerting the others to their location. Hardcourt hides. Lady Gay convinces Dolly to challenge Hardcourt to a duel, which, unexpectedly, he accepts.

**Act VI (Inside the house) 1:49:32:** In confidence Grace confesses her love for Charles to Max. Max prevents the duel and they disarm Dolly.



## Plot Synopsis

Sir Harcourt realises he has been duped and resolves to release Grace from their marriage contract. However, Grace insists on going through with the marriage to Sir Harcourt, as a ruse to force Charles's hand. It works and Charles declares his love for Grace.

**(1:59:14)** Meddle introduces his client Solomon Isaacs, explaining that Charles's creditors have caught up with him. Grace offers to pay Charles' debts. Dolly forgives Gay, and Sir Harcourt finds out his son's true nature as well as acceding to Charles's marriage to Grace.

### The End



## Find out more

### *Explore*

More materials relating to the production including the costume bible, poster, prompt scripts, programme, stage management reports and more are held at the National Theatre Archive, which is free to visit. Find out more here: <https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/archive>