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HONORÉ DAUMIER
1808 Marseille - Valmondois 1879

Scène d'une comédie de Molière

Pen and black ink, grey wash on laid paper; unsigned; executed c.1865-70.

Inscribed by Arsène Alexandre in pen and brown ink in the lower margin: *Recherches de personnages du théâtre de Molière, par H. Daumier, provenant de son atelier de Valmondois, souvenir affectueux d'Arsène Alexandre à son cher ami Coquelin cadet.* [Studies of characters from Molière's comedies, by H. Daumier, from his studio in Valmondois, for my dear friend Coquelin cadet from Arsène Alexandre in affectionate remembrance.]
135 x 160 mm

PROVENANCE: The artist's studio, Valmondois (1878) – Arsène Alexandre (1859 -1937), Paris (art critic and author of the Daumier biography *Honoré Daumier: L'homme et l'œuvre*, Paris 1888) – Gift of A. Alexandre (together with the drawing Maison D. 483) to the actor Ernest Alexandre Honoré Coquelin, known as Coquelin cadet (1848-1909) – Galerie Wertheimer, Paris – Galerie Durand-Matthiesen, Geneva – Reid & Lefevre Gallery, London – Lucien Goldschmidt Inc., New York – Mr. and Mrs. Philip J. Goldberg, London (loaned to the 1961 Tate exhibition) – Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox, London (1987) – Colin Clarke, London

LITERATURE: Alan Bowness and K. E. Maison, *Daumier: Paintings and Drawings*, exhib. cat., Arts Council of Great Britain, Tate Gallery, London 1961, no. 163 – Karl Eric Maison, *Honoré Daumier, Catalogue Raisonné of the Paintings, Watercolours and Drawings*, London and Greenwich CT, 1968 (reprint, San Francisco 1996), II (*The Watercolours and Drawings*), no. 483, p. 162 f., plate 164. – *Nineteenth Century French Drawings*, Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox, London 1987, no. 6. – *Daumier 1808-1879*, exhib. cat., Musée des Beaux-Arts du Canada, Ottawa 1999; Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Paris 1999-2000; The Phillips Collection, Washington 2000, p. 360, under no. 209, fig 1

EXHIBITIONS: Tate, London 1961, no. 163 – Hazlitt, Gooden & Fox, London 1987, no. 6

This charming drawing belongs to a small group of works inspired by the plays of Molière and the theatrical productions of the Comédie française.¹ At the right are the figures of a young couple standing back to back. Although their shoulders touch their arms are crossed over their chest. The woman's head is bowed, perhaps in frustration or disappointment. The man's head is turned towards her and his facial expression conveys sympathy and concern. A male figure sweeps in from the left, his cloak billowing. He stares at the audience, hands pressed to his face - horrified that whatever plan he had has gone awry. All three figures are dressed in typical Commedia dell'arte costumes.

One of the most famous works of this group is the painting *Crispin and Scapin* in the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, which was formerly in the collection of the painter Charles-Francois Daubigny.[Fig. 1].

The present drawing was at one time mounted in the same frame as a similar drawing which is now held in the Ackland Art Museum, Chapel Hill, N.C. [Fig. 2]. The two sketches remained in the frame

¹ For further information about the group, see 'Theatre, Molière', in *Daumier 1808-1879*, exhib. cat., Musée des Beaux-Arts du Canada, Ottawa; Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, Paris; The Phillips Collection, Washington, 1999-2000, pp. 352-61, nos. 203-210.

until they were separated in 1960. The inscription and dedication on the present drawing refers to both sheets.

'It is hardly surprising that Arsène Alexandre, who pioneered the study of Daumier's *œuvre*, should have gifted these 'studies of characters' to an actor who performed many of the great roles Molière wrote for the Comédie-Française, namely the role of Thomas Diafoirus in *Le Malade imaginaire* and Scapin in *Les Fourberies de Scapin* – to an actor who was also a "very astute, discerning and well-informed connoisseur of art"² and "... always so sophisticated in his most buffoonish flights of fancy."³ Coquelin Cadet [Fig. 3] could not help but appreciate this remarkable drawing – its frenzied draughtsmanship conveys the exuberant pace of the comedy and the vivacity of the performers. Accents of wash sometimes rework, sometimes interrupt the fine lines of the penwork, invoking the drama of the scene in all its colourful commotion and contrasts.' (Henri Loyrette)⁴



Fig 1: *Crispin et Scapin*, ca. 1863-05

Oil on canvas, signed with the initials: *h.D.*

60.5 x 82 cm. (Maison I-162)

Musée d'Orsay, Paris, gift of the Société des Amis du Louvre with participation of the children of Henri Rouart (RF 2057)

²Jules Claretie, in the preface to the catalogue of the Coquelin cadet Estate Sale, *Succession Coquelin cadet*, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, 26 May 1909. Jean Béraud portrayed Coquelin cadet in the role of Sylvestre in Molière's *Fourberies de Scapin* and J.-A. Muenier portrayed him as Diafoirus in *Le Malade Imaginaire*. The Daumier drawings were not offered at the Estate Sale, which included works by Béraud, Blanche, Bonnard, Cazin, Corot, Maurice Denis, Fantin-Latour, Sisley, Sorolla, Vuillard and Zorn.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Henri Loyrette, 'Théâtre, Molière', in *Daumier 1808-1879*, exhib. cat., Ottawa, Paris and Washington 1999-2000; op. cit., p. 360, no. 209, describing the drawing in the Ackland Art Museum, Chapel Hill (N.C.)

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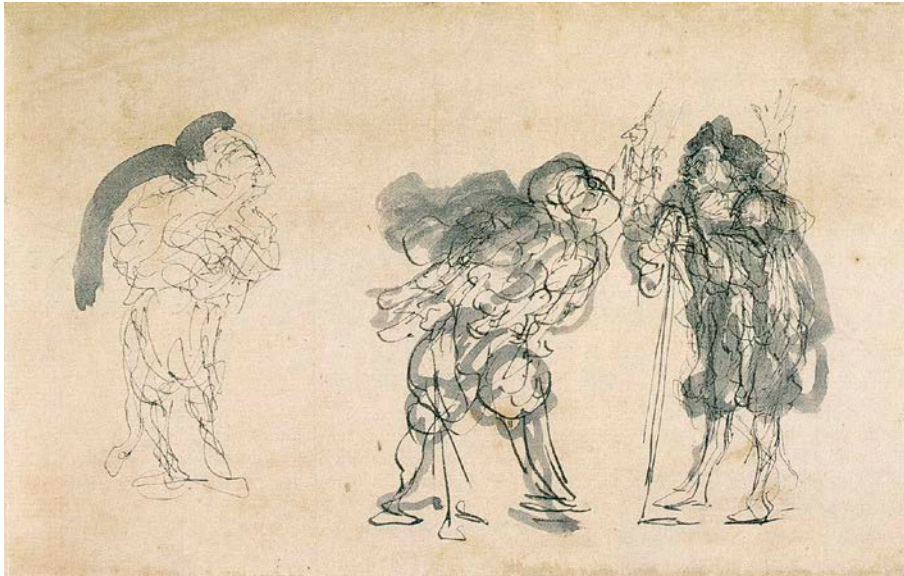


Fig. 2: *Scène d'une comédie de Molière.*

Pen and black ink, grey wash on paper, 135 x 195 mm. (Maison D. 484).

The Ackland Art Museum, The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (N.C.)



Fig. 3: Anders Zorn (1860 - Mora -1920)

Portrait of E.A. H. Coquelin cadet, 1889

Oil on canvas, 116.5 x 81.5 cm.

National Museum, Stockholm [inv. NM 6766]