

Tartuffe

BY MOLIÈRE

TRANSLATION BY RICHARD WILBUR

STUDENT MATINEES COMING SOON!

- **Mar. 27 &
Apr. 4 2012**
*Freud's
Last Session*
- **May 22, 2012**
Leaving Iowa
- **Oct. 3, 2012**
Gaudy Night
- **Dec. 4, 2012**
*Christmas Show
(TBA)*

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PLOT SUMMARY

Time Period:
17th century



Setting:
Orgon's house in
Paris

Orgon, a wealthy nobleman, has recently invited Tartuffe to stay at his house. Tartuffe has a reputation as a holy man, but the rest of the family are certain that Tartuffe is a fraud.

Orgon's second wife Elmire, his daughter Mariane, and his son, Damis all try to convince Orgon that Tartuffe is cheating him, but nothing will change his mind. Orgon even goes so far as to make Tartuffe heir to his property and to entrust him with secret documents that Orgon is holding for a friend. Orgon also breaks off Mariane's engagement to her true love, Valère, and orders her to marry Tartuffe instead.

At last the family decides to set a trap for Tartuffe in order to prove his hypocrisy

to Orgon. Elmire convinces Orgon to hide under a table while she talks alone with Tartuffe. Elmire knows that Tartuffe will try to seduce her and that Orgon will hear every word. The plan works perfectly. Orgon becomes so angry at Tartuffe's betrayal that he banishes him from the house.

Unfortunately, Tartuffe leaves with the secret documents and the deed to Orgon's house. Tartuffe takes this evidence to the King, accuses Orgon of treason and claims his right to take over Orgon's property. The baliff, Monsieur Loyal, arrives to arrest Orgon and turn the family out of the house.

Just when it seems like all is lost, Laurent, an officer from the King, comes to arrest Tartuffe. Laurent announces that the King knew all along about Tartuffe's fraud and Orgon's loyalty. Orgon's property and position are restored to him. The family is united, and everyone prepares to celebrate the wedding of Valère and Mariane.

CHARACTERS

Orgon: a wealthy nobleman
Madame Pernelle: Orgon's mother
Elmire: Orgon's second wife
Damis: Orgon's son by his first marriage
Mariane: Orgon's daughter by his first marriage

Cléante: Elmire's brother
Valère: Mariane's fiancé
Dorine: the maid
Tartuffe: a religious con-man
Laurent: an officer of the King
Monsieur Loyal: the baliff

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION: COSTUMES



Orgon



Madame Pernelle



Elmire



Tartuffe

Interview with Costume Designer, Sarah Gordon

I had the privilege of sitting down with Sarah Gordon, Taproot Theatre's Costume Shop Manager, to hear about working in the costuming world and her latest project, *Tartuffe*.

On Costuming

It is obvious where Sarah's ideas come from when one looks around her office. The walls are covered with pages from old magazines and paintings of costumes that span centuries. "To us it's inspiration – it stimulates a creative environment," Sarah explains. After reading a script, she'll pore through books calling on her Art History minor for reference in creating the perfect costume for each character. Once we got started talking about the intricate hand craftsmanship of ancient garments, we began flipping through a book full of rich colored fabrics and elaborate embroidery that she was using for research. One thing is certain, Sarah knows what she's doing and applies her education (she received her MFA in Costume Design from Temple University) and creative talent to each project she approaches, such as *Tartuffe*.

On Creating the World of *Tartuffe*

The fun thing about this production being set around 1630's-1665 is that, "the boys can look ridiculous." Take Tartuffe for example, who will be wearing the 17th century equivalent of a skort. The fun, cavalier style can be, "potentially poufy, with lots of frou," says Sarah. The clothes are reminiscent of the Three Musketeers, or at least a Musketeer wannabe.

Sarah is intentional in her design, considering style, texture and color. Keep an eye out in this show – the main characters will be wearing primary colors, while the servants and more minor characters will be wearing secondary colors. Ironically, there aren't many patterns available for this time period, which means Sarah and her team really are working from scratch and having the opportunity to be creative in designing and creating the character's attire. For a costume like Madame Pernelle's, which is being built from scratch, Sarah will use sheets from a thrift store to make a mock up, which will become the rehearsal skirt. Every shoe in this show came from a thrift store, except for the cavalier boots, which had to be specially ordered. Part of Sarah's job is to be a bargain shopper, coupon clipping and all. Not everybody can leave a fabric store and have the sales associate call after them, "you saved \$478!"

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION: SET

French theatre during the 17th century was greatly influenced by the Neoclassical Style. This was a movement that focused on recovering the Ancient Greek principles of theatre as written in Aristotle's, *Poetics*. Neoclassicists supported the rule of the Three Unities. They felt that for a play to be believable it should have:

- 1) Unity of Action – it should tell one story with a limited number of characters. No subplots.
- 2) Unity of Time – all the events should take place within a single 24 hour period.
- 3) Unity of Space – the story should take place in a single location.

Tartuffe conforms to all three unities. It tells a single story, that happens on a single day and all the action takes place in one house.

This means that there is never any need to change around the set for *Tartuffe*. Taproot Theatre Scenic designer, Mark Lund has created a split level platform set showing a main room in Orgon's house and all the scenes will take place in this room. The arched doorways, elegant paneling, and family portraits let the audience know that this is a wealthy man's house. While the furniture, doorways and alcoves create lots of options for people to hide and/or listen behind doors (which happens a lot in *Tartuffe*).

Set for Taproot Theatre's production of *Tartuffe*. Designed by Mark Lund.



THE COURT OF THE SUN KING

“Louis XIV was the king of France from 1643-1715 and is often considered one of France’s greatest kings. During the long reign of Louis XIV, called the Golden Age of France, France became one of the strongest powers in Europe.

Louis XIV was born on September 5, 1638 and took the throne a few months before his fifth birthday. During his reign, Louis XIV put much effort into the cultural state of France, shifting the country into a more refined way of living. He built the famous House of Versailles, known for its lavish beauty. Louis XIV was a ballet dancer and acquired the name “The Sun King” after he danced the role of The Sun King in a ballet called *La Nuit*, or Night. Louis XIV was also a great lover of art, music and theater, and helped many famous artists, such as Molière, flourish during his reign.



King Louis XIV (1638-1715)

In 1648 there was a violent civil war in France called The Fronde. In *Tartuffe*, Orgon’s friend was involved in The Fronde and he gave his papers, which proved he was part of the war, to Orgon in a locked box to keep safe. Orgon, in turn, gave the box to Tartuffe to keep safe. At the end of the play, those incriminating papers almost caused the arrest of Orgon, when Tartuffe turns them over to Louis XIV.

Louis XIV loved Molière’s satires (plays that are known to mock people or situations) as long as they didn’t make fun of the King. Molière’s choice to have the King “save the day” at the end of the play was due partly to the fact that the King could decide which plays were allowed to be performed in public. Molière wanted to stay in King Louis XIV’s good favor, so he chose to make him a hero at the end of *Tartuffe*.”

The Hall of Mirrors in the King Louis XIV’s Palace of Versailles



Article Reprinted from:
Tartuffe Study Guide for Students and Educators
 Created by the Education Department of Milwaukee Repertory Theater
<http://www.milwaukeeep.com/pdfs/Tartuffe.pdf>

MOLIÈRE



Molière (1622-1673)

“**Molière** (Jean-Baptiste Poquelin; 1622–1673) was a French playwright, actor, and troupe director. Born into a successful merchant family, Jean-Baptiste Poquelin received an education from the Jesuits and was studying law when, at the age of twenty-one, he renounced his career to join a troupe of itinerant actors. In 1643 he signed a contract with the actress Madeleine Béjart and other members of her family to establish a troupe which they called the "Illustrious Theater," but they were soon unable to pay their bills and Poquelin, who had assumed the stage name Molière, was jailed for debt in 1645. Once released, he and his troupe departed to tour the provinces.

From 1646 to 1658 they staged plays throughout the French countryside, with Molière gradually assuming a role as the troupe's leader, principal actor, and creator of scenarios for the farces that the group performed along with their centerpiece tragedies. In 1658 the Illustrious

Theater returned to Paris and were granted another opportunity to please the more difficult audiences of city and court, where they played first at the Louvre palace. The king's brother Philip, duke of Orleans, became their sponsor.

Beginning in 1659, Molière focused on performing his own plays. His attention to performance and staging and to the improvisational traditions of the commedia dell'arte remained paramount in his comedies, even as he developed an increasingly sophisticated vision of the comic genre. His greatest achievement as an author was to have invented a "comedy of character" that introduced psychological depth to stock comic situations, in the process drawing on traditions from popular farce and more serious drama....Throughout the first decade of the reign of Louis XIV, Molière produced plays commissioned for court spectacles, many of them on short notice, in which he also played the principal role. His *L'imromptu de Versailles* (1663) [for example] gives us an amusing inside look at his own troupe at work attempting to rehearse a play that Molière has not had the time to finish...

Molière died 17 February 1673, after collapsing during a production of his play *Le Malade Imaginaire* (The imaginary invalid), in which he was playing the title role. Denied burial on sacred ground because of his profession, he was finally interred, secretly and at night, in his parish cemetery by special permission of the king. The manner of his death has become part of his legacy; students of the theater regard him as an iconic figure, devoted to the stage, whose work bridges the gap that so often divides the play as text and performance. The chair in which Molière was seated during his last production is preserved in the halls of the Comédie Française, an institution founded by several of the members of his troupe six years after his death, and today the world's oldest theater company.”

Article Reprinted from: *Gale Encyclopedia of the Early Modern World: Moliere*
Elizabeth C. Goldsmith

<http://www.answers.com/topic/moli-re>

THE PLAY IN CONTEXT

“Molière’s comedic style is best described by the Latin phrase (coined by his contemporary Jean de Santeuil) “castigat ridendo mores” (roughly translated as “correct customs by laughing at them”). All of Molière’s most popular plays focus on a specific vice prevalent in society around him and then proceed to tear it apart, showing all of its idiosyncrasies in such a light as to make it the butt of a joke that even the offenders can enjoy and laugh at.

The play, *Tartuffe*, however, was a special case. In *Tartuffe*, Molière targeted the follies of religious hypocrisy. Generally speaking, “hypocrites” have never been famous for their sense of humor, so it is not surprising to learn that the early productions of *Tartuffe* were attacked viciously. Claiming that Molière’s characterization of a religious con-man was an attack on the church, the religious establishment of his day used their influence against the play. A fraternal society sprang up in the wake of *Tartuffe*’s premier: The Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament, or le Parti des Devots. This group along with the powerful Jansenists managed to get the play banned (twice) and declared it a mortal sin to have the play read, published, heard, or even talked about!



Early illustration of a scene from *Tartuffe*

Molière wrote an appeal to his patron, King Louis XIV (who was also godfather to Molière’s children) defending the script and declaring that his comedy did not attack the church, only hypocrites who hide behind religious language:

“Sire: since the task of comedy is to reform men while amusing them, I thought that given the work I do, I could do nothing better than to attack by caricature the vices of my age; and since hypocrisy is, without doubt, one of the most common, the most harmful, and the most dangerous of these, I thought, Sire, that I would render no small service to all the honorable men of your kingdom if I were to make a comedy that would discredit the hypocrites and present all the artificial gestures that these worthy folk display, all the hidden deceptions of these counterfeit saints who want to entrap men by their spurious zeal and compromising morals” (Steiner 2008).

Molière’s appeals to the King eventually allowed the play to be published. In his preface to the published version Molière once again defended his play to the world saying,

“... hypocrites do not understand a joke; they were instantly enraged and were appalled that I had the effrontery to present their grimaces and to try to describe a way of life that so many people engage in. Mine was a crime that they could not forgive, and they attacked my comedy with dreadful rage” (Steiner, 2008).

This play survived due to the bravery of its author. Keep his words in mind as you observe the antics of its heroes and villains, scholars and dupes. We all know a Tartuffe. We all know an Orgon. If we are really lucky, we might even know a Valere! Molière knew his work and he knew human nature. And this is why his plays are still produced, over 300 years after his death.”

*Dramaturg Notes written by
David Anthony Lewis*

FREYTAG'S PYRAMID

Article reprinted from:

Online Resource Guide to Freytag's Pyramid
<http://quickbase.intuit.com/articles/an-online-resource-guide-to-freytags-pyramid>

“Just like life, some stories are difficult to understand. Whether you are reading a novel or watching a play or film, there are times when you have to apply certain methods to better understand what you are reading or watching.

Gustav Freytag, a German novelist and critic of the nineteenth century, observed the similarity of plots so he created a pictorial tool to visually illustrate dramatic structure. Called Freytag's Pyramid, he constructed a pattern in the form of a pyramid to analyze the plot structure of dramas.

Freytag's Pyramid and Aristotle's Unified Plot Structure

In 350 BCE, Greek philosopher Aristotle wrote in his book *Poetics* that the unified plot structure of a drama is formed like a basic triangle. The lowest left termed by the Greeks as *protasis* is the introduction; the highest-middle or *epitasis* contains the crisis and the lowest right called *catastrophe* has the resolution of the conflict.

Freytag's Pyramid is a modification of Aristotle's structure where he transformed the triangle into a pyramid and added two other levels, the first is the rising action (or complication) placed between the lowest left and the highest middle and the second is the falling action placed between the highest middle and the lowest right end. Freytag used these five parts to analyze the structure:

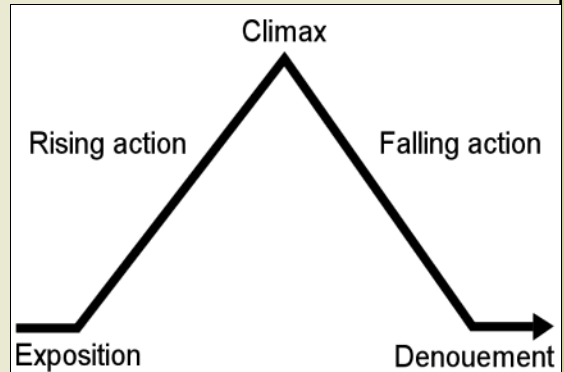
Lowest left = Exposition (introduction)

Left middle = Rising action

Highest point = Climax

Right middle = Falling action

Right lowest = Denouement (conclusion)”



Freytag and Tartuffe

Gustav Freytag created his “pyramid” almost two centuries after Moliere's death. But the Neo-classical influences in Moliere's writing use Aristotle's *Poetics* as a guideline for storytelling in the same way that Freytag's Pyramid does. This makes Freytag's Pyramid a useful tool for analyzing Moliere's comedies, as well as other classic plays from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries.

In the story of *Tartuffe*, for example:

Exposition: The play opens with introductory information about all the characters .

Rising action: The family tries various ways to get rid of Tartuffe, but Orgon refuses to believe them. Orgon's actions against his family get worse and worse. (*He disinherits his son, breaks off his daughter's engagement etc.*)

Climax: At last Elmire's trap succeeds in exposing Tartuffe and Orgon throws him out.

Falling action: Tartuffe leaves the house with secret documents and threatens to have Orgon arrested as a traitor.

Denouement: The King's justice prevails. Tartuffe is arrested. Orgon and his family are happy.

NOW YOU TRY IT

Freytag's Pyramid in Action

The classic plot structure that Gustav Freytag analyzed is still used today in many plays, short stories and novels. It's also the basic plot structure for most television shows and movies.

You Try It:

Pick one of your regular television programs. (*Crime/detective dramas work really well for this – but any show should work*). Watch the program looking for the five legs of Freytag's Pyramid. Chart the plot of the show on a Freytag Pyramid.

Exposition: What is the introductory information given to you in the show?

Rising Action: When does introduction stop and the action of the plot begin?

Climax: What is the crisis point in the story? (*Often this is a big decision, a dangerous situation, or something other major event for the main character.*)

Falling Action: After the climax how do they "tie up the loose ends" of the plot?

Denouement: What is the ending?

Warning: Your pyramid will probably not be evenly balanced like in the diagram.

Often in television shows/movies the climax comes at the very end followed by rapid falling action and a quick conclusion.

To Rhyme in Time

Moliere's original French script for *Tartuffe* was written in verse. Richard Wilbur's translation stays true to Moliere's original rhyming scheme. The play is written in **rhyming couplets**. This means that the lines are organized in pairs in which the last syllable of each line rhymes. Each line is also **decasyllabic**. This means that each line has ten syllables.

Look at the first four lines of the play. Notice the rhyming lines & count the syllables in each line:

Madame Pernelle: Come, come, Flip-ote; it's time I left this place.

Elmire: I can't keep up, you walk at such a pace.

Madame Pernelle: Don't trou-ble, child; no need to show me out.
It's not your man-ners I'm con-cerned a-bout.

You Try It

Write a conversation between two characters in rhyming couplets using ten syllables for each line. You can use any topic of conversation (*perhaps a parent scolding a child, or two friends arguing about something.*) Your dialogue should be at least 8 lines long, but can be longer if you wish.