Dramaturgical Research for the 2017 Production of *Tartuffe*

Research by Marie Phillips

**INTRODUCTION**

To give the cast a wider understanding of their characters and the show as a whole, I wrote six packets: a glossary of the script, a guide to understanding the use of language in the play, production history, a biography of Molière, a biography of the translator (Richard Wilbur), and “Life in Seventeenth Century France”.

**FUN FACTS**

- *Tartuffe* first premiered at a royal festival called *The Pleasures of the Enchanted* in May 1664.
- After its initial viewing, the French Academy banned the play until 1669.
- The play was written in alexandrines, but Richard Wilbur wrote his translation in heroic couplets.
- Orgon and his family were a part of the bourgeoisie, which was the rising upper middle class in 17th century France.

**AFTER THE SHOW**

After one of the performances, I had the opportunity to work with Dr. Joyce Johnston in hosting a reception. This event featured presentations from several of her French students. In addition, Dr. Johnston herself gave a presentation on *Lady Tartuffe* by Delphine de Girardin.

**FUN FACTS**

- The role of Mm. Pernelle was originally played by a man named André Hubert.
- In 1960, Richard Wilbur moved to Houston and worked with the Alley Theatre.
- By law in 17th century France, all plays were limited to a 24-hour time span, one location, and no subplots.
- Molière died shortly after a performance of his last play, *The Imaginary Invalid*, in which he was playing the lead.

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