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The saga of a
sudsy tradition
See Page 4B

THE Friday EDITION

Oregon daily emerald

arts & entertainment

february 22, 1985

Moliere's TARTUFFE



Tartuffe tries to seduce Elmire in the University Theatre's upcoming production of Moliere's comedy "Tartuffe." Lyle Mayer and Terra Pressler star in the show, which opens Thursday in Robinson Theatre.

An evening in another century...

When Grant McKernie and his crew set out to present Moliere's classic comedy "Tartuffe," they were determined to make it the French playwright's kind of show.

McKernie, head of the speech department and director of the University Theatre's production of that play, which is set to open Thursday, wanted to "re-create a night in the 17th century theater" for the audience, he said.

This involved staying as true as possible to the style of acting, costume, and lighting that was prevalent when Moliere was writing.

"With this particular play," said McKernie, "people usually don't put it back in that time period, but rather do an updated interpretation. I really enjoy re-creating the style and feel of a play's original time period."

As part of that effort, the director did a great deal of research on Moliere and French theater, including teaching a class on the playwright during fall term.

**Story by Michael Fisher
Photo by Steven Wall**

McKernie described "Tartuffe" as "a satiric comment on religious hypocrisy" — people using religion to tell other people what to do.

"As funny as the play is," he added, "it also makes a very important social statement."

Sandy Bonds, who designed the costumes for Tartuffe, also prepared rigorously for her task, traveling to England to research the style of dress and theatrical costume that Moliere would have employed in his time.

"I wanted to create costumes that are bright and happy and joyous — a celebration of Moliere," said Bonds.

She said that while in England, she was able to locate several early versions of the script, each of which included pictures of the costumes being used.

"Rather than researching the clothing of the time," Bonds explained, "I was interested in the costumes. We weren't trying to re-create a production of that time, but rather a version of the play that reflects that style."

One of the principal characters of the play, Orgon, is being played by Ed Collier, a teacher at Pacific University in Forest Grove and local actor who admires "Tartuffe" for its "style."

Unlike modern dramatic productions, where the audience is outside the events and action on stage, the plays of that period "are directed right at the audience," said Collier.

"Things are right up front," he added. "These characters don't attempt to hide much."

Tartuffe will continue March 1, 2, 7, 8, and 9 at 8 p.m. in the Robinson Theater. Tickets and information are available at the theater office, 686-4190.