

THE *Current*

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[Andrea Estrada](#)

‘Tartuffe’

When the comedy “Tartuffe,” by French playwright Molière, premiered at the Palace of Versailles in 1664, it was banned because church leaders — including the Archbishop of Paris — believed it attacked the foundations of religion. He issued an edict threatening to excommunicate anyone who watched, performed in or read the play.

A not-so-auspicious beginning.

More than 350 years later, the masterpiece that explores the concepts of hypocrisy and virtue — while confronting issues of authority and totalitarianism — will be presented by the Department of Theater and Dance. The show, adapted by David Ball and directed by Julie Fishell, opens tonight, and continues through March 7 in the campus’s Hatlen Theater.

In Molière’s satire, Tartuffe, who feigns piety and pretends to speak with divine authority, tricks wealthy homeowner Orgon into trusting him and believing every word he utters. Orgon’s family, however, recognizes Tartuffe’s manipulation, and hilarity ensues as they attempt to convince Orgon of Tartuffe’s perfidy.

“Everyone involved in our production, from actors to props artisans to designers to technicians, continue to chuckle and sometimes belly laugh as we work on ‘Tartuffe,’” said Julie, a lecturer in the theater and dance department.

“For example, conversations seamlessly range from historical research into 17th-century French religious objects to the possibility of using a whoopee cushion

onstage,” she continued. “Stage movement and choreography are being designed using images and manners from the time of the play with a soupçon of screwball comedy techniques. Did I mention we are having fun?”

The spirit of fun is fueled by their love of the play and how much sense they can make out of nonsense. Indeed, that has shaped their aesthetic for the production, she noted.

Fishell said she hopes the audience will have an experience with the play that is satisfying, regardless of their knowledge of Molière and “Tartuffe,” or the fascinating and rich historical, social and political realities of 17th-century France.

Performances are slated for 8 p.m. Feb. 27 and March 4 and 5; 7 p.m. Feb. 28 and March 6; and 1 p.m. March 7. Tickets are \$13 – \$19 and are available [online](#) or at the Theater and Dance box office.

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