

## "Tartuffe" to open as third performance by UCSD Drama Department

**April 3, 1974**

"Tartuffe," Moliere's brilliant and hilarious commentary on the blindness of self-deception, will open Friday, April 19, as the third production of the season offered by the Drama Department at the University of California, San Diego.

The classic comedy, directed by Eric Christmas, Director of UCSD Theatre, is scheduled for seven performances, April 19 - 21 and 25 - 28 with an additional performance set for Wednesday, April 24, as a fund-raising benefit for the UCSD Day Care Center.

All performances begin at 8:00 p.m. in the UCSD Theatre, Building 203 on the Matthews Campus. Tickets for the regular performances are \$1.25 for any student and \$2.50 for the general public. Tickets for the benefit performance, which are tax deductible, are \$10.00 and include a reception to follow the play.

Christmas, a member of the UCSD drama faculty for six years, will play the title role of Tartuffe as well as direct the play.

"I have wanted to do 'Tartuffe' (at UCSD for some time," Christmas said. "It concerns what would be considered today an upper middle-class family that holds together despite an upheaval in the home. It is a wonderful play about family love-more than anything else," he said.

"The play is really about Orgon, the father, who, as head of the family, is self-deceived by Tartuffe who pretends to be a very religious man," Christmas said. "In fact, Tartuffe seduces Orgon's wife and gets title to his house.

"After several hundred years the play is still with us because it is all about 'us'," Christmas said. "There is hardly a soul who hasn't been swindled through his own self-deceit."

"The play is very funny and is often played as a rather hectic farce," Christmas said. "But, I believe you should examine these people in relation to each other. They are very, very human and placed in some very funny situations. I prefer to present 'Tartuffe' as a comedy of character rather than a farce."

Christmas, who has played the title role before, directed the play in Richmond, Virginia, several years ago.

"Here we will be starting where I left off in Richmond," Christmas said. "There were many things in that production that I felt weren't right and this production gives me the chance to improve on them."

Christmas is using three other drama department faculty members and one UCSD staff member in the cast as well as himself. The remaining seven roles are played by UCSD students.

"Tartuffe" was first presented for Louis XIV of France during a festival in May, 1664. The king reportedly found the play "very amusing" but, under pressure from the church, forbade its being produced in the future. A considerably toned down version titled "The Imposter" was presented two years later in the Theatre of the Palace-

Royal in Paris. Finally, early in 1669, with a new pope and the stronger hand of the king, Moliere and his troupe were able to present "Tartuffe" as it is known today. The play was an instant and overwhelming success.

Christmas has set the play in the 1870's rather than in Moliere's time.

"By doing so we overcome some of the special problems presented by the clothes and fancy wigs worn in that earlier time," Christmas said. "Also, till the end of the last century, the father was considered the head of the household," he said. "If we moved it to the present age, no one would believe it."

The costumes for the five female roles are being designed and constructed by Deb Dryden, lecturer in the UCSD drama department, and the costumes for the seven male roles are being rented. All of the action takes place in one room of Orgon's 18th century home. The set will be sparse with just enough furnishing to suggest the location.

Christmas said he is using a recent translation of "Tartuffe" done by Richard Wilbur, a Professor of English at Wesleyan University.

"It is absolutely a tip top translation," Christmas said. "Most translations in the past have been very scholarly - very stiff and arch. Wilbur really did capture the true feeling of the original work," he said.

Tickets for "Tartuffe" are available through the UCSD Drama Department or at the UCSD Box Office. For information call 453-2000, extension 2491.

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