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#TartuffeLTC

Lantern Theater Company Opens 30th Anniversary Season with Molière's *TARTUFFE*, Translated into English Verse by Richard Wilbur and Directed by Charles McMahon, September 7 – October 8, 2023

PHILADELPHIA (August 17, 2023) – **Lantern Theater Company** is thrilled to launch its **30th anniversary season** with *Tartuffe*, Molière's comic masterpiece about family, fraud, and how what we want to believe can blind us from the truth. Translated into English verse by 1987/88 U.S. Poet Laureate and two-time Pulitzer Prize-winner **Richard Wilbur** and directed by Lantern Artistic Director **Charles McMahon**, Molière's classic comedy will come to life with a tremendous team of Philadelphia actors including **Morgan Charéce Hall, Gregory Isaac, Dave Johnson, Travoye Joyner, Jered McLenigan, Lee Minora, Campbell O'Hare, Cathy Simpson, Kahlil A. Wyatt, and Frank X.** The Lantern's production of *Tartuffe* runs **Thursday, September 7 through Sunday, October 8, 2023**, at St. Stephen's Theater, the Lantern's resident venue in Center City Philadelphia; a complete schedule of performances and audience enrichment events is included in the fact sheet below. Theater critics and members of the press are cordially invited to request press tickets for **opening night on Wednesday, September 13 at 7 p.m.** by contacting Anne Shuff at ashuff@lanterntheater.org.

Molière's incisive and hilarious play has moved from its controversial origins to a revered place in the comedy pantheon, while poking merciless fun at hypocrisy, greed, and false virtue. Orgon and his mother have become devoted to Tartuffe, a seemingly pious man whom they have taken in. But Orgon's wife and adult children know the truth: Tartuffe is a conniving huckster who has ensnared Orgon, and he is using his influence to milk Orgon for all he is worth. Orgon promises Tartuffe everything, including offering his daughter Mariane in marriage and signing over all the family's worldly possessions. It is up to the children and Orgon's wife Elmire to reveal the truth about Tartuffe before it's too late. A last-minute intervention by the King of France saves the day, and all but the titular con man get a happy ending – and hopefully for Orgon, a little more wisdom.

Molière had an important patron in King Louis XIV of France, and the earliest version of *Tartuffe* was first produced in 1664 at Versailles. But even the king's support could not keep the play from controversy; the Catholic Church and members of French aristocracy were scandalized by the play's pointed mockery of those who use the cover of piety for personal gain. The archbishop of Paris went so far as to threaten excommunication to anyone who read or saw the play. Despite a ban on public performances, its popularity endured, and the 1669 revised version has become the most-performed play in the Comédie-Française's repertoire. Over the last 350 years, *Tartuffe* has been produced on Broadway, on screen, on television, and in opera, and it has become a widely loved and studied addition to the theatrical canon. Richard Wilbur's 1961 translation, with its ingeniously witty rhyming couplets, is now regarded as the play's standard English version.

"I have been thinking about how I might approach this play now literally for decades," said Lantern Artistic Director **Charles McMahon**, who helms the production. "Somehow this time feels right for a classic comedy treating on slander, lies, misinformation, and hypocrisy – but what is truly remarkable is the complete inability of some people to believe the evidence of their own eyes when it contradicts what they feel should be true."

Lantern Theater Company will delve into the world of *Tartuffe* on its **Lantern Searchlight blog**, available online at lanterntheater.org/searchlight. Articles will be published throughout the production's run, exploring the life and work of Molière, the evolution and rules of classical French drama, *Tartuffe*'s controversy, behind the scenes interviews with the artists, and more.

Tickets for *Tartuffe* are \$28 – \$45 and are available online at www.lanterntheater.org or by calling the Lantern Box Office at **(215) 829-0395**. Discounts are available for under 30, seniors, U.S. military personnel, and groups of 10 or more. Performances of *Tartuffe* will take place at **St. Stephen's Theater**, located at 923 Ludlow Street in Center City Philadelphia. Face masks are welcome, but not required.

About the Lantern Artists

Tartuffe director **Charles McMahon** co-founded Lantern Theater Company in 1994 and serves as artistic director in addition to directing, writing, and acting for the company. McMahon has directed all but one of the Lantern's annual Shakespeare productions, including *Twelfth Night*, *Othello*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Tempest*, and *Coriolanus*. Other Lantern directing credits include *Travesties*, *The Plague*, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, *As You Like It*, *Henry V*, *New Jerusalem*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, *La Ronde* (also translator and adapter), *Richard III*, *King Lear*, *The House of Bernarda Alba*, and *A Doll's House*. His acting credits include Heisenberg in the Lantern's production of *Copenhagen*, and his writing credits include *Oscar Wilde: From the Depths* and co-creating an original adaptation of Dylan Thomas' *A Child's Christmas in Wales*.

The *Tartuffe* cast is headed by **Frank X** as Orgon, in his 20th Lantern production, including *A Man for All Seasons*, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, and *The Tempest*; **Jered McLenigan** (10th Lantern production, including *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, *Betrayal*, and Barrymore Award-winner for *Julius Caesar*) as Tartuffe the hypocrite; and **Campbell O'Hare** (*Travesties* and *Othello*) as Elmire, Orgon's second wife. The ensemble also includes **Morgan Charéce Hall** (*Travesties*, *The Royale*, and *A Man for All Seasons*) as Mariane, Orgon's daughter and Elmire's stepdaughter; **Gregory Isaac** (*The Royale*, *Travesties*, *Betrayal*, and *Fabulation, or The Re-Education of Undine*) as Orgon's brother-in-law, Cleante; **Dave Johnson** (*Travesties*, *The Tempest*, and *The Heir Apparent*) as Valere, who is in love with Mariane; **Travoye Joyner** (Lantern mainstage debut) as Damis, Orgon's son and Elmire's stepson; **Lee Minora** (*Twelfth Night*, *Travesties*, and *The Last Match*) as Dorine, lady's-maid to Mariane; Philadelphia theater legend **Cathy Simpson** (Lantern debut) as Madame Pernelle, Orgon's mother; and **Kahlil A. Wyatt** (*The Royale*) as the bailiff Monsieur Loyal.

The *Tartuffe* creative team includes scenic designer **Meghan Jones** (Lantern credits include *Betrayal*, *Don't Dress for Dinner*, and *Coriolanus*), costume designer **Kelly Myers** (*The Lifespan of a Fact* and *A Man for All Seasons*), lighting designer **Tydell Williams** (*Twelfth Night*), and composer/sound designer **Christopher Colucci** (37th Lantern production, including *Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol*, *Twelfth Night*, *Travesties*, and *A Man for All Seasons*). **Rebecca Smith** is the stage manager. Lantern professional apprentice **Maya Nguyen-Haberneski** is assistant director.

About Lantern Theater Company

Founded in 1994 and celebrating its 30th anniversary during the 2023/24 season, Lantern Theater Company's mission is to produce plays that investigate and illuminate what is essential in the human spirit and the spirit of the times. The Lantern serves the Greater Philadelphia region with award-winning productions and education programming, notably partnering with middle schools and high schools in the Philadelphia School District to provide in-classroom residencies in support of curricular learning. The Lantern became a national leader in streaming theater during the Covid health crisis, producing ten fully designed plays that were created and filmed in the company's resident home at St. Stephen's Theater, garnering coverage in national media including *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, and reaching more than 30,000 people in 15 countries and all 50 states.

Following *Tartuffe*, Lantern Theater Company's 30th anniversary season continues with two-time Pulitzer Prize-winner **Lynn Nottage**'s dramatic gem, *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*, directed by **Bianca LaVerne Jones** (Press Opening: Wednesday, November 15, 2023, at 7 p.m.); *Faith Healer* from legendary Irish playwright **Brian Friel**, directed by longtime Lantern artistic collaborator **Peter DeLaurier** (Press Opening: Wednesday, February 7, 2024, at 7 p.m.); and **William Shakespeare**'s lyrical and hilarious *The Comedy of Errors*, directed by Lantern Artistic Director **Charles McMahon** (Press Opening: Wednesday, May 22, 2024,

at 7 p.m.). The Lantern will also present its annual adaptation of *Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol*, a Philadelphia holiday tradition co-created by local theater artists **Anthony Lawton, Christopher Colucci,** and **Thom Weaver (Press Opening: Sunday, December 3, 2023, at 2 p.m.)**. More information is available online at www.lanterntheater.org.

Lantern Theater Company – 2023/24 Season
30TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON
FACT SHEET
Tartuffe

WRITTEN BY:

Molière

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE BY:

Richard Wilbur

DIRECTED BY:

Charles McMahon

CAST:

Morgan Charéce Hall as Mariane

Gregory Isaac as Cléante

Dave Johnson as Valère

Travoye Joyner as Damis

Jered McLenigan as Tartuffe

Lee Minora as Dorine

Campbell O'Hare as Elmire

Cathy Simpson as Madame Pernelle

Kahlil A. Wyatt as Monsieur Loyal/Ensemble

Frank X as Orgon

CREATIVE TEAM:

Meghan Jones, Scenic Designer

Kelly Myers, Costume Designer

Tydell Williams, Lighting Designer

Christopher Colucci, Sound Designer & Original Music

Rebecca Smith, Stage Manager

Maya Nguyen-Haberneski, Assistant Director

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TICKET INFORMATION:

Online: www.lanterntheater.org

By Phone: (215) 829-0395

TICKET PRICING:

\$28 – \$45 / Under 30: \$25

PERFORMANCES:

Thursday, September 7 – Sunday, October 8, 2023

PREVIEWS:

Thursday, September 7 at 7 p.m.

Friday, September 8 at 8 p.m.

Saturday, September 9 at 8 p.m.

Sunday, September 10 at 2 p.m.
Tuesday, September 12 at 6:30 p.m.

OPENING NIGHT:

Wednesday, September 13 at 7 p.m.

REGULAR RUN:

Wednesday at 2 p.m. on September 20 [AIC], September 27 [AIC], and October 4
Wednesday at 7 p.m. on September 20, September 27, and October 4
Thursday at 7 p.m. on September 14, September 21, September 28, and October 5
Friday at 8 p.m. on September 15, September 22, September 29, and October 6
Saturday at 2 p.m. on September 16, September 23, September 30, and October 7
Saturday at 8 p.m. on September 16, September 23, September 30, and October 7
Sunday at 2 p.m. on September 17 [AIC], September 24 [AIC], October 1, and October 8

CLOSING PERFORMANCE:

Sunday, October 8 at 2 p.m.

ARTISTS IN CONVERSATION [AIC]

Moderated post-show discussions with the cast immediately follow 2 p.m. performances on Sunday, September 17; Wednesday, September 20; Sunday, September 24; and Wednesday, September 27. Lantern Resident Dramaturg **Meghan Winch** will lead the discussions.

PLAY SYNOPSIS:

Prim and devout Orgon invites Tartuffe, a charlatan par excellence, into his bourgeois household, laying the scene for equal parts domestic disruption and social outrage. Banned for decades by civil and religious authorities who found the play too close for comfort, this masterpiece from perhaps the most beloved comic playwright of all time is a searing and hilarious study in how we collaborate in our own deception.

PERFORMANCE VENUE:

St. Stephen's Theater at 923 Ludlow Street in Center City Philadelphia

HEALTH & SAFETY PROTOCOLS:

Face masks are welcome, but not required.