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Moliere Lives!

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Moliere Lives!

March 29, 2010

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. - A scurrilous rumor circulating for the last 300 hundred or so years, suggests that Molière is dead, the victim of a coughing seizure amid the performance of his final play, *The Imaginary Invalid*. Molière is alive and better than ever, and performing under the name Timothy Mooney. Not only is Molière still alive, but he speaks English, and is every bit as insightful, ribald, irreverent and enthusiastic as the first time around. Come see *Molière Than Thou*, coming to the Young Main Lounge of the IWU Memorial Center (104 University Street) at 7 p.m. on Friday, April 2, 2010. Admission is free to this event.

Mooney's work with Molière goes well beyond his celebrated, manic performance of 10 of his monologues. Mooney has re-written 15 of Molière's plays in their entirety, bringing a dexterity of English speech to these works which were so dazzling in their original French. This language barrier has distanced Molière from the English-speaking audience, which has never appreciated him as well as his renaissance brother, Shakespeare. *Molière Than Thou* finds a Molière who stands toe-to-toe with Shakespeare, trading brilliant couplets late into the night.

In the course of his 85-minute one-man play, Mooney seduces the audience with a complexity of language that is a sensual delight. Parading through the best loved plays of France's history, *Molière Than Thou* reinvigorates renaissance theatre, the court of Louis XIV, and the vision which generated some of the most beloved plays of all time.

Mooney's performance is literate, enthusiastic, and athletic. The play won a "Best of" award from the San Francisco Fringe Festival, and was listed *first* of the "Top Ten Artistic Events of 2006" from the *Chattanooga Pulse*. In its Orlando Fringe performances, the press raved "Clearly Moliere lives," "A delight for all those who appreciate the barbed satire and slyly nuanced language in Molière's classic skewerings of the rich and pompous." Winnipeg Fringe reviewers celebrated: "The listener can draw all the available pleasure from the splendid speeches penned by the man considered the French Shakespeare," and commended "Mooney's unbelievably expressive eyes and fabulous facial expressions." The New York media exclaimed, "Move over Richard Wilbur, Timothy Mooney is the real deal ... A very tight performance which should be seen by any aspiring actor who wants to tread the boards." One audience member cheered, "I've seen the *Comedie Francaise*, and they've got NOTHING on this guy!"

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"Molière Than Thou" Reviews

Best of Fringe: Best Adapted Work

San Francisco Fringe Festival

The audience is enthralled ... Move over Richard Wilbur, Timothy Mooney is the real deal. ... A very tight performance indeed, which should be seen by any aspiring actor who wants to tread the boards. The only thing to anticipate is when will there be a New York performance of a full length Molière/Mooney play with an ideal cast, and an edition of his translations in print. — George Psillides, nytheatre.com

#1 of the "Top Ten 2006" One-of-a-kind ... original, weird and seriously funny ... one of the most creative and refreshing pieces of classical theatre I've seen in years. ... Mooney's translations make Molière's 17th century language instantly accessible. His interpretations were crisp, stylized and sang with the comic genius of the playwright's original intent. — Ruth Cartlidge, *Chattanooga Pulse*

Playwright-actor Tim Mooney has become playwright-actor Jean Baptiste de Poquelin, a.k.a. Molière" ...in Mooney's own artful translations...The humanities are in safe hands this year. — *San Francisco Bay Guardian*

"A" ... For 75 minutes, this production transports us to Paris of 1671 where we meet Molière (or a really playful rendition of him) ... Mooney bounds into the role of actor-playing-actor-playing actor [with] unbelievably expressive eyes and fabulous facial expressions. He's a delight to watch, his memory is remarkable ... and he looks like he's having so much fun. — Janice Sawka, Uptown (Winnipeg)

**** ½ Outstanding ... He brings the words of this 17th century playwright to life with his animated performance... There were a number of patrons who found the performance too short, because they could have listened to Mr. Mooney all day. — Ken Gordon, CBC

What Mooney captures so deftly ... is how skilled Molière was in painting scathing portraits of the rich and pompous ... the listener can draw all the available pleasure from the splendid speeches penned by the man considered the French Shakespeare. — Kevin Prokosh, *Winnipeg Free Press*

With just a costume, a series of wigs and a knack for the language he gives you a good idea of the foolishness, the conniving, the boasting and the masquerading that goes on whenever you see one of Molière's plays. ... Clearly Molière lives. — Alan Hindle, Terminal City

Mooney is clearly enraptured by the great French playwright ... The translations are wonderful. ... well worth seeing, both for those familiar with the work and those looking for an accessible introduction. — Amy Barratt, *Montreal Mirror*

... Sparkling eyes, infectious grin and elastic face ... the consummate over-the-top showman. — Robin Chase, The Jenny Revue

Quick Plot summary:

"Molière than Thou" finds Molière alive and well, if a little bit freaked out from his fellow performers all having come down with food poisoning from eating "the same sort of shell fish." Given that his company is in the middle of a capital campaign to buy new curtains, he cannot just refund the audience's money, but offers instead to share what bits and pieces he can perform on his own. Fortunately, he originally played most of the leading characters in his various plays, and the King's quirky demands for

command performances from the back catalogue have kept a large array of characters fresh in his memory.

As such, he moves from "School for Wives" to "Bourgeois Gentleman" to "Tartuffe," "Scapin" and "Precious Young Maidens" with surprising ease, constantly employing (some say exploiting) members of the audience as his scene partners and objects of attention. It's a 17th Century rogues gallery of Fops, Scoundrels, Cuckolds and Conniving Servants!