

Molière's Tartuffe **a new version by Frank McGuinness**

Audio Description Programme Notes

Welcome to the audio description introduction to Molière's **Tartuffe**, a new version by Frank McGuinness.

This production is directed by Caitríona McLaughlin. Set and Costume Design is by Katie Davenport, with Lighting Design by Sinéad Wallace. The Composer and Sound Designer is Philip Stewart. The Movement Director is Paula O'Reilly.

The performance runs for approximately two hours and twenty minutes with one twenty minute interval. Patrons who leave the auditorium during the performance may not be readmitted. Please note that strobe lighting effects and haze will be used during the show.

ABOUT THE PLAY

The Abbey Theatre's **Tartuffe** is a classic dramatic comedy about a hypocrite - a fraud who inveigles himself into a family's home and heart.

Molière didn't know he was writing about 21st Century Ireland, but **Frank McGuinness** certainly did. We can all recognise figures like Tartuffe, who say one thing but do another behind closed doors. The difference is that, today, Tartuffe uses 280 characters and knows all the best angles for his selfies.

Under Caitríona McLaughlin's direction, Frank McGuinness's retelling of this exuberant farce is wrapped in a flamboyant production, reflecting the age in which we live. Lavish design and costumes are more haute couture than baroque, while the pop-influenced soundtrack is a statement in itself.

ABOUT THE SET

The action of the play takes place in the home of Orgon, a wealthy member of the nobility. There are high ceilings with elaborate Georgian plasterwork and coving, parquet wooden floors and walls covered in fantastical murals, as rich and as opulent as an 18th Century landscape painting.

The set is divided into two rooms. Two thirds of the stage, on our left, is the ornate dining room of this palatial home. Here, the walls are painted with a mural of a rural scene under a large tree, with game birds – pheasants, and cockerels, and birds of prey - all jostling and pecking at each other, their claws or talons bared. In the far left corner, a mural of a decaying Roman stone doorway is painted around the actual doorway architrave, with a plump cherub perched on top. Through this doorway is a hall, and a series of further away doorways through the massive house.

The lower part of this muralled wall is clad in wooden panelling to a height of about one metre, and painted a chalky grey. The wooden parquet floor in this room is a mix of honey-coloured and dark wood planks.

In the centre of the room is a long dining table of burnished metal, its long side running left to right. On the near side is a matching bench seat, the same length as the table, and also in burnished metal. At either end of this table, and on the far side, are Perspex chairs moulded to mimic the shape of ornately carved antique dining chairs.

During this performance, this table is regularly set for meals with overflowing dishes and bowls containing tropical fruits, platters with whole roast chickens and steamed lobsters, and cake stands with delicately balanced piles of pastel-coloured macaroons. Wine flows freely from crystal decanters into the silver goblets that match the metal table.

Light bounces off all these metal surfaces from the large and elaborate crystal chandelier that hangs over the dining table, as well as the two silver candelabras that sit in the centre of the table. Richly coloured heavy damask tablecloths are draped artfully for each meal, and swept away quickly - as quickly as the food!

Apart from the main door into this room in the far left corner, there are also several secret doors in the murralled walls that have no door frames. Only the small brass door-handles remind us of their presence. There is one secret doorway on the wall on our left, and three in the wall facing us.

This dining room takes up two thirds of the stage. The remaining one third, on our right, also has high ceilings, panelled walls, and parquet floors. However, the corridor that makes up this side of the stage has a very different character, and is mostly used by the staff of the house. The walls are painted a pale grey, the parquet flooring in grey planks, and the lighting comes from three fluorescent strip lights hanging from the ceiling, casting a grey-blue light. On the wall on the far right is a single, small window, with two simple grey chairs against the wall. There is a double power socket next to one of the chairs, with a phone charger plugged in. On the back wall, facing us, is a simple wooden doorway.

Overall, the impression of the house, and the costumes worn, suggest the 18th Century. But the music played at times throughout the performance, and the style of dancing when the occupants of the house are revelling, hint at the modern era. The servants in Orgon's household all have touchscreen mobile phones, which they scroll through and fixate on whenever their masters aren't watching.

ABOUT THE CAST AND COSTUMES

Orgon, head of the household, is played by **Frank McCusker**. A thin man of about sixty, he has thinning grey hair, a slim face, and neat, pointed beard and moustache. He arrives wearing a cloak of heavy jacquard material, with a pattern of exotic and tropical fruits, and lined with purple. Underneath, he wears a sage-green silk frock coat, with a gold silk long waistcoat underneath, and a purple cravat, over mustard-coloured velvet baggy hose gathered at the knee. He wears white stockings and suede sand-coloured desert boots with floppy mustard ribbons for laces.

Orgon's wife, **Elmire**, is played by **Aislín McGuckin**. A woman of about forty, Elmire is slim and elegant, and wears her very long auburn hair pulled back into a high ponytail and cascading down her back in soft, tumbling curls. She wears a plum silk corset, with a matching, tight-fitting sleeved jacket over it, fastened at the front with hooks and eyes. Her full-length, padded skirt is of gunmetal grey silk, with a printed pattern of Venetian buildings, and is overlaid with a fine grey tulle skirt. Underneath she wears black thigh-high stockings, and neat ankle boots with diamonds on the heels. Elmire is stepmother to Orgon's two adult children.

Mariane, Orgon's daughter, is played by **Emma Rose Creaner**. In her late teens, Mariane is pale-skinned with rosy cheeks, with curly dark brown hair which she pins up at the back, with soft tendrils framing her face. She wears a silk gown in lime green, with puffed sleeves. The skirt is full-length at the back, but coming to just below the knee at the front. She wears knee-high socks and lace-up shoes, both in grey.

Orgon's son **Damis**, a man in his early twenties, is played by **Naoise Dunbar**. He wears a peach silk shirt with a ruffled front, and gold jacquard trousers, and loafers. His jacket is made of a heavy tapestry material with pale gold tassels hanging from the shoulder panels. His dark brown hair is heavily slicked with gel.

Orgon's brother-in-law and Elmire's brother, **Cleante**, is played by **Kevin Trainor**. Cleante's blonde hair is also heavily styled with gel. He wears a navy velvet smoking jacket over a pale grey silk shirt, with bronze silk jacquard trousers, and navy suede loafers with gold tassels on them.

Orgon's mother, **Pernelle**, is played by **Geraldine Plunkett**. A woman of about eighty, she has grey hair, styled loosely into a chignon. She wears a feathered headpiece of sea-green that blends with streaks of the same colour in her own hair at the back. Pernelle wears a full-length silk gown in gunmetal grey, with a high neckline and ruff that goes to right up under her chin. Occasionally, she lifts the hem of her skirt just enough to reveal her teal blue velvet ankle boots with blue metal block heels.

Valere, played by **Emmanuel Okoye**, is Mariane’s lover, whom she hopes to wed. A tall, slim man with neatly trimmed black hair, Valere is about twenty. He wears a sky-blue long duster coat, over a silk tunic with floral print, silver jacquard trousers, and sparkling gold slip-on shoes.

The sharp-tongued and quick-witted housekeeper, **Dorine**, is played by **Pauline Hutton**. A woman in her thirties, she wears her dark brown hair pulled back severely into a neat bun at the nape of the neck. She wears a plain black silk gown, with clean lines, a low, square neckline, long sleeves, and full-length skirt. Around her neck she wears a white, starched Jacobean ruff. On her feet, Dorine wears black stockings and black lace-up boots.

Filipote, another servant in the household, is played by **Clare McKenna**. She wears a plain, off-white linen blouse and a grey linen skirt, covered with a teal blue apron, tied quite high, around her ribcage. She wears a cloth cap to cover her dark brown hair.

Tartuffe is played by **Ryan Donaldson**. A tall, trim man, much taller than anyone else in Orgon’s household, Tartuffe is in his thirties, with thick brown hair and a moustache and beard. He wears a white cotton shirt with billowing sleeves, under a black velvet sleeveless doublet – a kind of padded waistcoat with broad shoulders. Tartuffe wears the same style of baggy hose as Orgon, gathered at the knee, but in black leather material with a feathered texture that shimmers under the lights as though covered in sequins. He wears white stockings to the knee, and black leather lace-up boots.

Monsieur Loyal, a bailiff, is played by **Amy Conroy**. With blonde hair cut short and styled into a quiff, Monsieur Loyal wears a formal jacket of grey silk with dark pink rose pattern, and three parallel lines of dark pink down each sleeve, as though it were a tracksuit top. Underneath this, Loyal wears a dark pink silk bomber jacket with gold zip, black silk cargo trousers with multiple pockets, and black workman’s boots, well-polished.

That concludes the audio description introduction for **Tartuffe**. It was prepared by Bríd Ní Ghruagáin. Audio description at the Abbey Theatre is provided by Arts & Disability Ireland with support from The Arts Council.

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Thank you. Go raibh maith agaibh.

