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UVA DRAMA TO PRESENT *TARTUFFE*

**Acclaimed Director Sabin Epstein To Lead Production of Molière's Timeless Classic About Family
And The Universal Danger of Falling Under Sway of Hypocrisy**

Opens November 30 at the Ruth Caplin Theatre

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA – November 9, 2018—The UVA Drama Department will continue its 2018-2019 season with a production of Molière's classic and highly topical *Tartuffe*, which takes a hard look at the dangers of hypocrisy and the troubles it presents for a family and, in a larger sense, a society.

Nationally acclaimed director Sabin Epstein will direct the production, which opens on November 30 at the Ruth Caplin Theatre and runs through December 6. Tickets are for *Tartuffe* are \$14 for adults, \$12 for seniors and UVA staff and alumni association members and \$8 for students. Tickets are available online at www.artsboxoffice.virginia.edu, by calling 434-924-3376 or in-person from noon until 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday at the UVA Arts Box Office, located in the lobby of the Drama building.

Hailed as one of the world's greatest comedies and banned after its 17th Century debut, *Tartuffe* remains one of the world's most produced plays, thanks in large part to its timeless and ever-relevant themes of family and hypocrisy. It is the story of a seemingly pious religious zealot who wows a family while hiding the shallowness and deceit at his core. The family ultimately finds him out, but not before being pushed to the brink of ruin.

Epstein, who has directed the play multiple times over the years and across the country, attributes its appeal to its timeless themes and connection to basic human experiences that transcend time. "It is exactly the same as working on Shakespeare or any timeless classic," he said, "It is all open and subject to interpretation, and it shifts and changes every time you collaborate with someone new."

Epstein recognizes that some audience members may make a connection to current political figures, but adds that any such connection is not intentional on his part. "My thinking is not to pervert or to change the focus of the play to suit a particular political moment," he said. "If an audience is able to draw inferences from what is happening right now, then I say more power of the play."

The play, Epstein said, is more about the whole idea of being swayed. "It really focuses on what happens when people dig in stubbornly to their point of view, and will not listen to anyone else. That is certainly the story of this particular family, as its patriarch Orgon is in a spiritual crisis, and is in a place where he is seeking something meaningful in his life. When he thinks he has found it in this person, who turns out to be a fraud, he refuses to hear any other point of view."

The production features the Richard Wilbur translation of the play, which is written completely in rhyming couplets. “We have been working hard with the cast to learn how to speak this language, Epstein said, “and to make sure that they don’t get so caught up in the music that they don’t listen to the lyric. It is so important for the actors and the audience to focus on what is being said. Once you break this code, it really comes down to basic acting.”

Epstein believes the play’s subject matter has a sense of universality that allows audiences to connect with it. “Basically, it is a story about a family being challenged by a hypocrite, and how people rise to that situation. So I think that if an audience member can see themselves somewhere in this blend, the whole experience will be immensely satisfying. I really believe the production will be very alive, including being visually interesting and featuring a sense of spontaneity while ranging from broad Commedia dell’arte archetypes to subtle human interactions. I hope that it will be an entertaining and provocative experience for our audiences.”

The production also marks a homecoming for Scenic Designer Jeffrey Kmiec, who earned his M.F.A. at UVA, where he was mentored by UVA Drama Associate Professor Tom Bloom. Now based in Chicago, Kmiec is an award-winning scenic designer and graphic designer with an extensive list of credits on the Second City theatre scene as well as across the country. Kmiec won Jeff Awards in 2015 for his work on a 2015 production of *Les Miserables* at Paramount Theatre (Aurora, Illinois) and in 2016 for the Drury Lane Oakbrook production of *Deathtrap*. Kmiec has also worked at the American Players Theatre, Illinois Shakespeare Festival, Arkansas Shakespeare Theatre, Children’s Theatre of Charlotte and the Heritage Theatre Festival at UVA.

Parking for UVA Drama Department is available at the Culbreth Road Parking Garage, conveniently located alongside the theatres.

To access photos of this production, visit <https://virginia.box.com/s/hr8q7h8zjih1wunn6gvy91o4x9lja6o>

For more information on the 2018-2019 UVA Drama season, visit <http://drama.virginia.edu/current-season>.