

About Moliere. (OCR Computer Copy From Play Program)

Jean-Baptiste Poquelin Moliere - the greatest comic dramatist of French literature, was born in Paris in January 1622 into the prosperous commercial middle class. His father was Upholsterer to the King, which was a high official position. he was a pupil at the Jesuit School in Paris, and later took a degree in Law at Orleans. It was the custom of the Jesuit School for boys and masters to collaborate in the production of Latin plays and this is probably where he acquired the taste for theatre. In 1640 he met a celebrated mime artiste called Scaramouche and set out to emulate his skill. The following year he joined a group of actors led by 22-year old actress Hadeleine Bejart. In 1643 they set up a business partnership, in addition to the romantic partnership which they had been enjoying for some time, and together founded the Illustre Theatre. In 1645 the troupe of 25 artistes set out on a tour of the provinces which was to last 12 years. It was during these years that he came into close contact with the people and made acute, humerous, observation of his fellow men. The Company eventually returned to Paris and performed before Louis XIV at the Louvre, and the King eventually became patron of the Company. In 1661 a marriage contract was signed by Moliere and Armand Bejart, described as a 'sister' of Hadeleine. In his lifetime he was accused of an incestuous marriage with his own illegitimate daughter, but the more optimistic view is that the lady was the daughter of Radeleine and one of her aristocratic lovers. the marriage was a disaster. Moliere was still writing plays and quite often they were thought to be attacks on the principles of Christianity and were the beginning of difficulties which were to last for the rest of his life. Tartuffe', the most controversial, was banned. Although it was performed privately, in different versions, before the highest people in the land, the ban lasted for five years but then, in 1669, it was performed to packed houses. Every play that he wrote around this period excited disapproval from the institutions which were lampooned and they used their influence either to remove the performance from the stage or to modify the script. Often Koliere gained favour by writing 'entertainments' which were light-hearted tours-de-force. After 1667 he continued to produce comedies, ballets and grand spectacles and re-established himself in society. La halade Imaginaire' expressed holiere's profound loathing of hypocrisy, particularly in his rooted hostility to medicine. He regarded doctors as quacks interfering with natural processes. This play is the story of Roliere's death, though we must avoid our interpretation being coloured by the tragic outcome. But there is little doubt that Lrgan and Beralde are both portraits of the artist. Beralde is the healthy Holiere trying to rally the sick holiere (Argan), arguing that his sickness is all stuff and nonsense. His career ended tragically. A play with holiere in the chief role was produced in February 1673. For years he had been a sick man: he probably suffered from tuberculosis. In the middle of a performance he was seized with convulsions and they carried him to his home where he died.