



LaCriée

Théâtre national de Marseille Direction Macha Makeïeff



Théâtre national de Marseille

**CREATION**

**Festival des Nuits de Fourvière** June 12th - 16th, 2015

**La Criée** December 16th, 2015 – January 17th, 2016

# Molière **Trissotin** or the Learned Ladies (1672)

Directed, Sets and Costumes by **Macha Makeïeff**

Estimated running time: 2h15

## CONTACTS

---

**Anne Kuntz**

*Administratrice de production*

T. + 33 4 96 17 80 04

[a.kuntz@theatre-lacriee.com](mailto:a.kuntz@theatre-lacriee.com)

**Tristan Bourbouze**

*Directeur de production*

T. + 33 4 96 17 80 37

[t.bourbouze@theatre-lacriee.com](mailto:t.bourbouze@theatre-lacriee.com)

# Molière **Trissotin** or the Learned Ladies (1672)

Directed, Sets and Costumes by **Macha Makeïeff**

Estimated running time: 2h15

With

**Marie-Armelle Deguy** *Philaminte*  
**Vincent Winterhalter** or **Louis-Do de Lencquesaing** *Chrysale*  
**Arthur Igual** or **Philippe Fenwick** *Ariste*  
**Maud Wyler** *Armande*  
**Vanessa Fonte** *Henriette*  
**Geoffroy Rondeau** *Trissotin*  
**Thomas Morris** *Bélise*  
**Ivan Ludlow** *Clitandre*  
**Atmen Kelif** *Vadius*  
**Karyll Elgrichi** or **Louise Rebillaud** *Martine*  
**Arthur Deschamps** *L'Épine, Julien*  
**Camille de la Guillonnière** or **Pascal Ternisien** *Le Notaire*

Lighting Designer **Jean Bellowini** Assisted by **Olivier Tisseyre**  
Sound Designer **Xavier Jacquot** Hair and Make-up Designer  
**Cécile Kretschmar** Assisted by **Judith Scotto** Assistant Directors  
**Gaëlle Hermant** and **Camille de la Guillonnière** Scenic design and  
Props Assistant Margot Clavières Props Construction **Patrice Ynesta**  
Costumes Assistant **Claudine Crauland** Production Stage Manager  
**André Neri** Iconography **Guillaume Cassar** Diction **Valérie Bezançon**  
Set Construction **Atelier Mekane** Trainees (Pavillon Bosio)  
**Amandine Maillot** and **Sinem Bostanci**

Production La Criée Théâtre national de Marseille

Coproduction Festival des Nuits de Fourvière ; Théâtre Gérard Philipe, Centre Dramatique National de Saint-Denis ; Centre Dramatique National Orléans/Loiret/Centre ; Centre Dramatique Régional de Tours - Théâtre Olympia

## Molière or the Learned Ladies

A family is being torn apart in the name of the *bel esprit*. On one side, Philaminte, her daughter Armande and sister in law Bélise, fiercely opposed to marriage but in love with poetry, philosophy and science. On the other side, the guarantors of natural behaviour, Chrysale a bourgeois in thrall to his wife's whims, the graceful Henriette, their second daughter... not to mention the common sense of the servant, Martine. Close to *The Affected Young Ladies*, the three allegedly learned ladies reflect the evolution in customs of that time, raising their contempt for household matters to the level of their metaphysical ambitions. The marriage arranged by Philaminte between the flatterer Trissotin and Henriette, who is besotted with Clitandre, is at the heart of the plot.

*The Learned Ladies* premiered in March 1672, on the stage of the Théâtre du Palais-Royal, which was Molière's official theatre since 1661.

For once, the play was performed alone, it was not followed by a one act comedy. It proved an instant success. Molière was not commissioned by the King, he relaunched a subject close to his heart, the access to knowledge for women, a subject for which he had already officially requested a privilege as early as December 1670. *The Learned Ladies* is thus both a work of maturity, Molière is then 50, and a work of maturation as confirmed by its finely elaborated composition and the versified writing the poet did not practiced since *Le Misanthrope* in 1666.

More than a satire of women or knowledge, Molière's penultimate play is a family portrait where, under the pretext of universal doctrines, the material value reigns supreme. Central to this: the reigning madness exploited by a schemer, the disintegration of a family caused by the father's or mother's foolishness. In writing a comedy about learned ladies, Molière imposes a sceptical vision of the world that laughter only may foil.

## Interview Macha Makeïeff

### ***Where do you stand with your relationship with Molière after several months of work ?***

**MACHA MAKEÏEFF** I feel like haunted, sort of a Philaminte in my own way, “mad” about this author and this piece! I have, for such a powerful language, the fascination I would have for sheet music; because this language is organic, because it beats like a heartbeat. I have a special fondness for the ageing author, his art at its peak, who writes his penultimate play, disillusioned, rather miserable, possibly very lonely. I feel he was a little paranoid knowing all there is to know, and too much, about the human heart. The perversity he inscribed in the situations he designed for his characters unsettled me.

From the first scene on, two smart and vibrant young sisters face one another; under the pretext of confronting their two radically opposed life vision, two contradictory understanding of their status of daughter and woman, they quarrel over the same man whom the eldest has been in love with for two years yet whose advances she hasn't gave in; and to whom the second has decided to get married in order to escape the family home.

In turns they will be victims of the unreasonable mighty power of their mother, of the cowardice, the indecisiveness of their father, of the madness that took over their home. They are preys and resist the best they can.

### ***Are every character in a state of pain?***

**M.M.** Yes, a whole bourgeois world is flying off the hook, the waltz of the egoists, an outburst of violent and contradictory desires, a triumph of denial, of manipulation. Marital disputes, generations' gap, siblings' gap and social violence, parasitism, weakness abuse attempt. But the spirits of comedy show through and make the story of this crazed family unexpectedly humane and funny.

### ***Surprisingly, the play's genuine title, which you use, is Trissotin or the Learned Ladies, which would imply that the main role is that of a man?***

**M.M.** This title indicates a pedant, a pretentious man, whose ambitions are those of a predator. This little lady's man for middle aged ladies is a revealing personification of the family tensions, frustrations, fragilities, neurosis and of all of their egoistical agendas. Molière's enjoyment in making this character detestable shows, one may feel it. A grotesque seducer reveals the unfortunate paths to women emancipation and to everyone's dismay.

### ***But the feminine characters gallery is quite rich...***

**M.M.** To me they are but great feminine figures. No fool, no timorous here. Great personalities only. Even in madness. Henriette will not be a grown up Agnès who could regard marriage as a comfortable end, an ideal set up; she is a revolted girl, vehemently rebelled against the maternal doxa. Armande, her elder sister, is in the grip of her mother whom she admires yet who will sacrifice

her, and who develops the program of a delusional utopia, with an unbelievable fervour. Bélise is the perfect figure of erotomania, convinced that every man is in love with her, spinning around; Martine, the dismissed servant, whom I imagined belonging to Henriette's and Armande's generation, states her freedom loudly and gaily and even in a misogynistic and transgressive speech. It should be noted that, throughout History, any enigmatic woman was labelled mad or deviant. Witch, suffragette, Dr Charcot's patient, artist, Femen, they are classified in this way. Our ladies here are no exception.

***These feminine characters have often been treated as archetypes. How to avoid such a pitfall?***

**M.M.** In restoring their intelligence and the power of their desire, even when they are led astray. In remembering their humanity, the violence they are subjected to and their production, the power of their reverie and its noxiousness. When women are no longer controllable, when one doesn't grasp where female desire begins and where it ends, when frames break, men are left in a terrible situation of questioning, of unease, of dismay; then they respond recklessly.

***You regard this play as being a "great comedy"?***

**M.M.** Yes, comedy is the energy of everything. With strength and mischief, it allows giving voice to the violence of human relationships, the excesses, the noxiousness of sectarian ideologies which move against the movement of life. Molière is not a pontificator; he does not offer a cosmic demonstration of the appalling human condition. He says that the world is certainly violent but liveable, that theatre is hence a means of living better in this world of contradictions. He always refers back to the human being, terrible yet endearing.

***Often do the directors of so called "classical" plays think that it is essential to state that they are also contemporary. To you, is Trissotin "also" a contemporary play?***

**M.M.** It is our role to make it heard today. It is all about that: reaching the women and men who will stand before us, who came to the theatre. Emancipation, breaks, transmission, awkwardness, damages and free enjoyments. Being in turns: Armande, Henriette, Bélise even someday, definitely Philaminte and also Martine. The echo must be instant. Win the heart, the eyes, the ear.

*Interview conducted by J.F. Perrier, April 2015*

# Macha Makeïeff

Since 2011, Macha Makeïeff manages La Criée Théâtre national de Marseille and endeavours to gather around a challenging theatrical programme the entirety of the artistic activities she carries out and supports, as to develop a singular project inscribed in the urban fabric of the city of Marseille she is native of, and where she has been a student of the Conservatoire d'art dramatique.

As a student, she meets Antoine Vitez (French actor, director and poet) who entrusts her with her first directing experience and Jérôme Deschamps (French actor, director and stage author) with whom she embarks on an artistic adventure of more than twenty years. She will be involved in every company's project they create together; writing, directing and designing the costumes and sets of their various performances; and directing the TV show *Les Deschiens* (a very popular French humour show). Thus, an unmistakable style is born, a fond and cruel vision, funny, off-the-wall, that is to be found in the shows she creates for La Criée : *The Apaches* in 2012, *Ali Baba* in 2013 (touring in 2014 and 2015) ; she also co-directs 40 vignettes *Ali Baba* Marseille for Arte.

Her musical affinities led her to dedicate herself to directing operas, from Mozart's [*The Abduction from the*] *Il Seraglio* at the Festival d'Art Lyrique d'Aix-en-Provence, Offenbach's *Bandits* at the Opéra de Paris, *Zampa* by Hérold, *L'Etoile* by Chabrier at the Opéra Comique, Cavalli's *La Calisto* at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, *The Breasts of Tiresias* by Poulenc, *Moscow, Cheryomushki* by Shostakovitch, *The Merry Widow* at the Opéra de Lyon... not to mention *Mozart Short Cuts* at the Grand Théâtre de Provence. She assists French singer Vincent Delerm in the production of his show *Memory* at the Théâtre du Bouffes du nord. >>>

In 2000, she founded "Les Films de Mon Oncle" with Jérôme Deschamps, it is entirely devoted to the international influence and restoration of Jacques Tati's works. She was the artistic director of the Théâtre de Nîmes from 2003 to 2008 and chaired the Audiovisual Innovation Support Funds at the CNC from 2009 to 2011. She often involves herself in the life of the Pavillon Bosio, école d'Arts plastiques de Monaco, of which she leads the scientific committee. She designs exhibitions and performances at the Fondation Cartier, at the Parc de la Villette, at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs de Paris, in the premises of Nîmes' Carré d'Art, at the Louvre, at the Festival de Chaumont sur Loire, at the Cinémathèque française, at the Alcazar... and she is also the scenography designer for the exhibition of the costumes of the Opéra Comique, at the Centre national du costume de scène de Moulins. Macha Makeïeff designed the costumes of *The Good Woman of Setzuan* by Brecht, directed by Jean Bellorini in 2013, she directed *Les Âmes offensées* from the accounts of French ethnologist Philippe Geslin in 2014.

In collaboration with the MuCEM, she designed and performed with the author, *Lumières d'Odessa* by Philippe Fenwick, showcased at the 2015 Rencontres d'été de La Chartreuse Villeneuve lez Avignon.

## Trissotin 2015 / 2016 Tour

CDN Orléans / Loiret / Centre September 29th to October 2nd, 2015  
La Maison de la Culture d'Amiens (MCA) October 6th and 7th, 2015  
Théâtre Louis Aragon, Tremblay-en-France October 10th, 2015  
Théâtre National de Nice October 15th to 18th, 2015  
La Comédie de Reims CDN November 3rd to 6th, 2015  
Théâtre Gérard Philipe CDN de Saint-Denis November 11th to 29th, 2015  
MAC Scène Nationale de Créteil December 2nd to 5th, 2015  
NTA Nouveau Théâtre d'Angers December 8th to 11th, 2015  
La Criée Théâtre national de Marseille December 16th to 20th, 2015  
and January 5th to 17th, 2016  
Centre Dramatique Régional de Tours January 20th to 29th, 2016  
Le Théâtre Scène Nationale de Saint-Nazaire February 3rd to 5th, 2016  
Le Parvis - Scène Nationale Tarbes Pyrénées February 8th and 9th, 2016  
Le Domaine d'O, Montpellier February 12th and 13th, 2016  
Le Manège, Maubeuge February 23rd and 24th, 2016  
Théâtre Liberté, Toulon March 2nd to 4th, 2016  
Théâtre de l'Archipel Scène nationale Perpignan March 8th and 9th, 2016