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**25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season**  
**A Noise Within, L.A.'s Acclaimed Classical Repertory Theatre Company, presents**

## **Molière's *The Imaginary Invalid***

**October 9-November 19, 2016**

**Directed by Julia Rodriguez-Elliott**

Pasadena, CA (September 21, 2016) -- A Noise Within (ANW), the acclaimed classical repertory theatre, presents the third production of their 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season, Molière's *The Imaginary Invalid*, directed by Julia Rodriguez-Elliott, adapted by Constance Congdon, and based on a new translation by Dan Smith. *The Imaginary Invalid* runs from Sunday, October 9 – Saturday, November 19, with a press opening on October 15.

*The Imaginary Invalid* tells the story of Argan, a man whose mounting medical debts are due to his mental neuroses grossly outweighing his physical maladies. He will go to any length to reduce his growing pile of medical bills, and comes up with a scheme to marry off his daughter, Angélique, to a doctor.

Angélique has other ideas – and high comedy ensues replete with thwarted love, false identities, dexterous wordplay, musical interludes, and a healthy dose of derision towards the most unscrupulous aspects of the medical profession. This merry-go-round of misplaced desires and hidden agendas takes center stage in Congdon's 2007 translation, which was originally written for American Conservatory Theatre. Pulitzer Prizewinner Tony Kushner said Constance Congdon is "one of the best playwrights this language has produced."

Julia Rodriguez-Elliott says, "Argan is a man railing against his mortality, and is so fueled by his obsessions he doesn't recognize the damage he's doing to the people around him. The brilliance of Molière is that he's turned this destructive isolation into a sparkling, effervescent romp! So much of the comedy is about how oblivious he is to the vultures that are taking advantage of him, and the lengths in which the people in his life navigate his neurosis."

"It's slapstick hilarity to watch the characters go right to the brink of insanity, but there is an underlying basis of reality – to some extent, we are all blinded by our own behaviors," continues Rodriguez-Elliott. "We are still preoccupied with the idea of cures: whether it's by googling our symptoms, or falling victim to palliative treatments given by modern-day snake-oil salesmen. 350 years later, our obsessions and anxiety over our mortality still turn us into clowns."

Over the course of 25 years, A Noise Within has become renowned for their adaptations of Molière; this is their eleventh adaptation of his work. ANW first performed *Tartuffe* during their second season in 1992 and again in 2014. Other Molière productions at ANW include *The School for Wives* (1994, 2005), *The Learned Ladies* (1997), *The Misanthrope* (2000), *The Imaginary Invalid* (2001, current season), *The Miser* (2003), *Don Juan* (2008), and *The Bungler* (2012). The only playwright they've produced more frequently is Shakespeare.

Rodriguez-Elliott continues, “We have taken a lot of lessons from Shakespeare and Molière – both were true men of the theatre. As actors, they had an intimate knowledge of their acting companies and their audiences. Their work has a very direct appeal to audiences then and now because it communicates in a very straightforward way.”

The cast includes Apollo Dukakis\* as Argan, Deborah Strang\* as Toinette, Kelsey Carthew\* as Angélique, Freddy Douglas\* as Mr. Fleurant/Mr. de Bonnefoi, Josh Odess-Rubin\* as Cléante, Jeremy Rabb\* as Doctor Purgeon, Rafael Goldstein\* as Claude De Aria, and Carolyn Ratteray\* as Béline. \* Denotes member of Actors' Equity

### **Praise for *The Imaginary Invalid***

Robert Hurwitt in the *San Francisco Chronicle* said, “The world of Molière's notorious hypochondriac Argan is comically off-kilter.” Dennis Harvey in *Variety* said, “A bright evening of amusement ... lean, clean and comically bent. Lively fun!”

Tiffany Maleshefski of *Theatremania* said, “An entertaining and jovial romp! It is not only amazing that the play still stands the test of time, but how visionary this comedy, in Constance Congdon's new adaptation, has become. Or should we really be surprised in this age of plentiful medication – as doctors scribble prescriptions faster than it takes to gulp a handful of pills down with a glass of water – that *The Imaginary Invalid* feels as relevant today as it did when healers swore by snake oil and holy water rather than Nexium and Zoloft? The great Frenchman's last contribution to the world's stage proves that time has stood still when it comes to the eternal nature of the hypochondriac.”

### **About Molière**

Jean-Baptiste Poquelin (1622-1673), known under his assumed name Molière (for which no certain source has ever been discovered), achieved recognition as one of the greatest comic writers of his time and of all time. The theatre captured his imagination from an early age: his maternal grandfather used to take him to see the celebrated farce players at the Hôtel de Bourgogne.

His family was well off enough to send him to study at the Jesuit-run Collège de Clermont, where he was educated in ballet, philosophy, and other humanities. Expected to succeed his father as Court upholsterer, he scandalized his respectable family in 1643 by co-founding the L'illustre Théâtre, with his lover, Madeleine Béjart, a talented actress and member of the famous Béjart family. The theatre troupe went bankrupt only 2 years later. After a 24-hour stint in prison, he returned to the acting circuit with his new pseudonym, Molière, and founded a new theater troupe: La Troupe de Molière.

The early years were fraught with problems, but by 1658 the company was sufficiently confident to try their fortunes in Paris again. They brought with them a repertory of tragedies, full-length comedies, and short comic curtain raisers; it was with one of Molière's own one-act comedies, *Les Précieuses Ridicules*, that the company first attracted acclaim. Although a farce in plot and structure, it made a sharp satirical comment on the French elite. Eventually, the company primarily produced Molière's own plays, written as acting vehicles for himself and his colleagues.

Molière's success was not achieved without obstacles -- a particularly nasty campaign against him alleged that his wife, Armande, whom he married in 1662, was not the younger sister of his lover Madeleine Béjart but her—and therefore probably Molière's own—daughter; and several of his plays, especially *Tartuffe* and *Don Juan*, were subjected to fierce opposition from Church authorities, the former was banned from 1664 until public performance of the show was finally authorized in 1669. Even with these setbacks, Molière grew in favor with the King, and the company eventually occupied the Théâtre Palais-Royal.

Molière had the uncanny ability to exploit the tastes of Louis XIV and his courtiers to positive artistic effect, while, at the same time, exerting a decisive influence on the evolution of mainstream comic drama, molding the taste of Paris audiences, and imposing on them an equally original conception of comedy.

His final years were spent in sickness. He suffered from pulmonary tuberculosis, likely contracted while spending a night in debtor's prison. During an early performance of *The Imaginary Invalid*, Molière (as Argan) suffered a coughing fit, which ruptured a vessel and caused severe hemorrhaging. He managed to finish the performance, but collapsed backstage. He was taken home, where he died several hours later without receiving last rites (two priests refused and the third was late).

As an actor, he was denied permission to be buried or given a proper funeral, but the King ended up giving him a "secret" funeral at night, attended by 800 people. He was buried in a corner of a cemetery reserved for unbaptized babies. In 1792 his remains were taken to the French museum, and in 1817, he was reburied in Pere Lachaise, a famous Parisian cemetery. His mausoleum is now located near the grave of Oscar Wilde, another persecuted comedic playwright who died in Paris.

### **Symposium, Conversations, and Pay What You Can**

The run of *The Imaginary Invalid* includes a symposium on Wednesday, October 12 at 6 pm and post-performance conversations with the artists on Friday, November 4 at 8:00 pm, Sunday, November 13 at 2:00 pm, and Friday, November 18 at 8:00 pm.

**Pay What You Can** tickets (Thursday, October 13 at 7:30 pm) go on sale at the box office window the day of the performance, starting at 2:00 pm, and are sold on a cash-only basis based on availability; limit of two tickets per person.

### **About the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Season 2016-2017 – *Beyond our Wildest Dreams***

The theme of the season *Beyond Our Wildest Dreams* resonates with all of the plays for the season – *Arcadia* by Tom Stoppard (Sept 4- Nov 20, 2016), *The Maids* by Jean Genet (September 18-November 12), Molière's *The Imaginary Invalid*, adapted by Constance Congdon based on a new translation by Dan Smith (October 9-November 19), which all play in repertory this fall. *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, adapted for the stage by Geoff Elliott (December 2-23, 2016), returns for its fifth holiday season in December.

Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia* concerns the relationship between past and present, order and disorder, and certainty and uncertainty, and is set in Sidley Park, an English country house in Derbyshire, in both 1809 to 1812 and the present day. The activities of two modern scholars and the house's current residents are juxtaposed with those of the people who lived there in the earlier period. Many critics have praised it as the finest play from one of the most significant contemporary playwrights in the English language.

In *The Maids*, Genet's characters Solange and Claire are two housemaids who construct elaborate sadomasochistic rituals -- an elaborate and highly eroticized fantasy world in response to a lifetime of abuse -- when their mistress "Madame" is away. The focus of their role-playing is the murder of Madame and they take turns portraying both sides of the power divide.

Next spring, ANW presents Shakespeare's *King Lear* (February 12- May 6, 2017), *Ah, Wilderness!* by Eugene O'Neill (March 5-May 20, 2017), and *Man of La Mancha* by Dale Wasserman, music by Mitch Leigh and lyrics by Joe Darion (March 26-May 21, 2017), which round out their celebratory season. With *Lear* and *Man of La Mancha* being performed on the same set, audiences will be able to see both plays performed on the same day in *The Great Escape*, on two days-- Saturday April 22 and Saturday May 6.

## About A Noise Within

A Noise Within, celebrating its 25th Anniversary during the 2016-2017 season, was recently named “one of the nation’s premier classical repertory companies” by The Huffington Post, and is a leading regional producer based in Pasadena, CA. ANW’s award-winning resident company practices a rotating repertory model at their state-of-the-art, 283-seat performing space. This venue, established in 2011, has allowed ANW to expand its audience, surpassing its previous box office, subscription, and attendance records each year. In addition to producing world-class performances of classical theatre, the organization runs robust education programs committed to inspiring diverse audiences of all ages. Helmed by Producing Artistic Directors Geoff Elliott and Julia Rodriguez-Elliott, who hold MFAs from San Francisco’s American Conservatory Theatre, A Noise Within truly delivers CLASSIC THEATRE, MODERN MAGIC.

[www.anoisewithin.org](http://www.anoisewithin.org)

### Calendar Listing: *The Imaginary Invalid*

#### Molière’s *The Imaginary Invalid*

Directed by Julia Rodriguez-Elliott

At A Noise Within, 3352 E Foothill Blvd, Pasadena, CA 91107

#### Performances:

Sunday, October 9 at 2:00 pm

Wednesday, October 12 at 7:30 pm

(*Symposium* at 6:00 pm)

Thursday, October 13 at 7:30 pm (*Pay What You Can*)

Friday, October 14 at 8:00 pm

Saturday, October 15 at 8:00 pm (Press Opening)

Sunday, October 16 at 2:00 pm

Sunday, October 23 at 2:00 pm and 7:00 pm

Saturday, October 29 at 2:00 pm and 8:00 pm

Thursday, November 3 at 7:30 pm

Friday, November 4 at 8:00 pm (*Conversations*)

Sunday, November 13 at 2:00 pm and 7:00 pm

(*Conversations* after 2:00 pm)

Thursday, November 17 at 7:30 pm

Friday, November 18 at 8:00 pm (*Conversations*)

Saturday, November 19 at 2:00 pm and 8:00 pm

#### Tickets and information:

Website: [www.anoisewithin.org](http://www.anoisewithin.org); Phone: 626-356-3100 ex 1

Prices: Single Tickets from \$44.00, Student Rush with ID an hour before performance \$20.00

Groups (10 or more): Adults from \$30/ticket; Students from \$18/ticket

*Pay What You Can* Performance: *Pay What You Can* tickets (Thursday, October 13 at 7:30 pm) go on sale at box office on day of performance at 2:00 pm, and are sold cash-only, based on availability; limit two tickets per person.

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