Designing *Tartuffe*: the Costumes.

Professor Martin Thaler is the designer for *Tartuffe*. UVM students sat down with him to discuss his concept and process for the modern production of the 17th century classic that UVM Theatre will present on November 7th to November 11th.

In this production, the inspiration of the modern setting comes from the modern translation of the text used in the production. Thaler began his design process by reading the play anew. As a seasoned designer, Martin Thaler has interacted with *Tartuffe* many times, and this is his third time working as a designer on this French classic.

What discoveries did Thaler make in this process? “As I read this new translation, I felt the sense that this family is very close knit. I wished to reflect this feeling in my designs so I selected a contained palette to unify the household in a very obvious way. From there I wanted the intruder (Tartuffe) to feel very different from this until, but look forced into it”.

Working off of this palette, Thaler described how he then added varying amounts of statement colors to indicate characterized separation from Tartuffe.

Thaler wanted Orgon's household to feel very unified and outlandishly wealthy. Orgon wears a red, white and black smoking jacket and Elimire's dress lining matches it. Dorine, a personal assistant, and voice of reason, wears a suit with a pattern that incorporated all of the colors in the show.

The structures of the costumes in this piece are heavily influenced by “Super Haute Couture”. Thaler gained inspiration from high fashion designers like Christian Dior and Ralph Lauren and fused the looks with styles found in the Restoration period in which Moliere wrote. Elmire’s costume particularly represents this idea: both the collar of her
bodice and her split skirt echo typical fashions during the 1660s.

When you come and see the show, take a second to look down...you may notice the actor’s wearing glamorous or gaudy shoes. Thaler emphasized the importance of the shoes to embodying a character. “Shoes change the actor’s energy entirely; they provide posture, strength, and walk that can aid in character specificity like no other costume piece”.

In many productions, the character of Tartuffe wears all black; in his designs, Thaler aimed to subvert that expectation. His goal for this particular costume was to make Tartuffe look Papal but tacky. Thaler did not want to deny the humor in this character; in his design, he included gaudy accents for the costume like a large gold cross and a pair of snakeskin shoes, to the tailored, all-white suit that the character wears.

To see more of Martin Thaler’s designs, check out @uvmtheatre on Instagram OR better yet, come see the designs in their full glory on November 7th through November 11th. Tickets are available at the Royall Tyler Theatre Box Office, via phone call at 802-656-2094, or online at https://bit.ly/2PoOTmc.