



# Molière's Strategies: Timely Reflections on his Art of Comedy (Medieval and Early Modern French Studies)

*Walter E. Rex*

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Of all the playwrights from the age of Louis XIV, only Molière's work is still regularly performed in France and beyond. This book analyses certain elements of the plays that may explain Molière's longevity: a plausible chain of events peppered with shocks and surprises; tensions between opposites; intellectual concerns that had not previously been the province of comedy; and plots founded on situations that are anything but comic. These hallmarks added up to an intense type of comic theatre, meaningful in ways that gave the genre a new dimension. The author of this study does not treat Molière's plays as variations on a single prototype, but brings a fresh approach to each. The book's witty, learned and penetrating readings examine critical issues such as the ambiguous anti-feminism of *Les Femmes savantes*, Molière's revisions of the myth of Don Juan, 'conversion' as the theological starting point of *Le Tartuffe*, contrariety as the basis of comedies such as *George Dandin* and *Le Misanthrope*, and coded satire in the *comédie-ballets*. Each play is revealed to have a seamless comic design, while at the same time speaking to the wider world. Molière's works are shown to be entirely and immediately involved in human society, in the social dimension of the human condition.

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