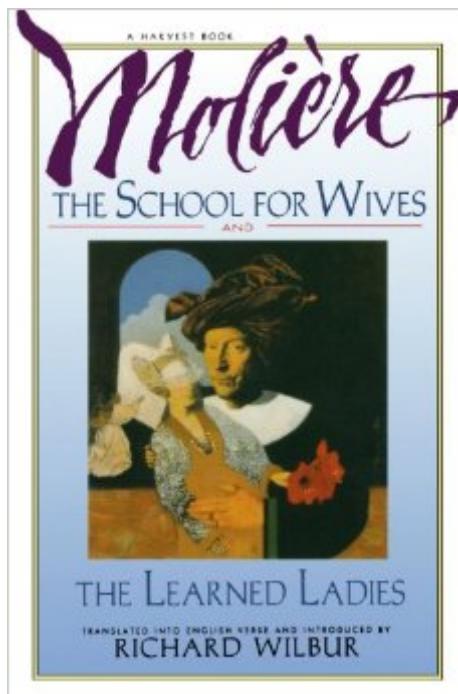


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The School For Wives And The Learned Ladies, By Moliere: Two Comedies In An Acclaimed Translation.



Synopsis

The School for Wives concerns an insecure man who contrives to show the world how to rig an infallible alliance by marrying the perfect bride; The Learned Ladies centers on the domestic calamities wrought by a domineering woman upon her husband, children, and household. "Wilbur...makes Molière into as great an English verse playwright as he was a French one." (John Simon, New York). Introductions by Richard Wilbur.

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Customer Reviews

I've read all but one of Pulitzer-Prize winner Richard Wilbur's translations of French master playwright Moliere. This is my favorite. I was provoked to laugh out loud many times while reading it, something I rarely do with contemporary comedies, much less ones written in the 17th Century. The School for Wives I found more fresh and delightful than any present-day television sit-com and The Learned Ladies had its moments as well (especially the poetry reading by the pedantic Trissotin). The School for Wives centers around a man, Arnolfe, who is afraid of being cuckolded. He has raised a girl from when she was very young to know nothing but praying and sewing, so that when she marries she will not have the wherewithal to cheat on him. Of course, a young man in the neighborhood happens to see her while Arnolfe is out. In a series of misunderstandings, the young man ends up enlisting Arnolfe's aid in wooing the girl. Arnolfe's every attempt to thwart their union is in turn thwarted by her. She may have been raised ignorant, but she is not stupid. The Learned Ladies is, in present context, somewhat misogynist. Much of the comedy revolves around the

matriarch of a family who rules her household "like a man." The plot again involves young lovers separated by a willful parent. The daughter of the matriarch wants to wed a young man who is equally in love with her but her mother wants her to wed the stuck-up court poet Trissotin. This is really just a pretext for a lot of the deflation of pomposity at which Moliere excels. For those who like the old battle-of-the-sexes screwball comedies, here is a likely progenitor. The most famous of Moliere's plays are *The Misanthrope*, *The Hypocondriac* and *Tartuffe*. If you've already read them and like them, then I have no reservation recommending this delightful double-header.

Lovers of dramatic literature and poetry alike will be entranced by these masterful translations by Richard Wilbur of Moliere's work. While the two plays present in this volume are not as famous or frequently-produced as his "Tartuffe" and "The Misanthrope" readers will find they are equal in wit, rhyme and joy.

I bought this for class and I really love it. I thought it was going to be "another boring play" that I would have to read for that class, but I was so wrong. Moliere is freaking hilarious, and Wilbur does a great job of translating it. Though that's probably misleading of me to say since I don't actually speak French, nor have I ever encountered Moliere before purchasing this book. Seriously though, it's great, it's funny, you should definitely buy it.

Moliere and Wilbur, though they did not, of course, work together, are a match for Gilbert and Sullivan as a wedding of talents. Each of these plays is very funny and full of insights about human vanity.

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