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UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS  
Department of Drama  
WORKSHOP COMPANY and MONTANA MASQUERS

present

# AN ITALIAN STRAW HAT

By Eugene Labiche and Marc-Michel

APRIL 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 1968

Directed and Choreographed by LESTER HARVEY HANKINSON  
Designer and Technical Director, GLENN GAUER  
Costume Designer, CORLISS NICKERSON  
Music Director, NANCY JOHNSON  
Piano Accompanist, TOM ENMAN

## CAST

(In order of appearance)

Virginie .....	Rosalie Bracco
Felix .....	Rick Stokes
Vezeinot .....	George D. Cowan
Fadinard .....	Teddy Ulmer
Anais .....	Aylett Wright
Emile .....	James Schmidt
Nonancourt .....	Ralph Schmidt
Helene .....	Sharon Strobel
Bobin .....	Mike Minor
Clara .....	Linda Atkinson
Tardiveau .....	William Shryock
Baroness de Champigny .....	Sue Helen Hunt
Achille DeRosalba .....	Jack Lynch
Baroness' Servant .....	Jim Malin
Baroness' Maid, Clothilde .....	Diane Danichek
Beauperthuis .....	Paul Anderson
Corporal .....	Dick Russel
Soldier .....	Tod Briggs
Wedding Party .....	Mary Lou Buster, Julie Blakemore, Patty Duncan, Jim Betson, Mike Mercer, Jim Malin
Baroness' Guests .....	Terri Doremus, Eric Henke, Sheila Frazier, Tod Briggs, Pam Kelley

## Synopsis of Scenes

### ACT ONE

- Scene 1. The home of Fadinard.
- Scene 2. A millinery establishment.
- Scene 3. The parlor of the Baroness de Champigny.

### ACT TWO

- Scene 1. A bedroom in the house of Beauperthuis.
- Scene 2. A square in the town.

The action takes place in Paris during the 1890's

## PRODUCTION STAFF

Assistant to the Director/Stage Manager .....	Terri Doremus
Lighting .....	Gary Sullivan, Jack Thomson, Patti Swoboda
Properties .....	Linus Carleton, Colleen Curry, Francis Morrow
Scenery .....	Duncan Crump, James Curry, Robert Cocetti, William Shryock, David Herbert, Dick Russel, George D. Cowan
Make-up .....	Sue Helen Hunt, William Shyrock
Wig Construction .....	Jeannie Belangie
Costumes .....	Judy Parker, Mike Minor, Cheryl Meirhofer, Don Volk, Jeannie Belangie, Sue Helen Hunt, Diane Danichek, Jim Malin, Teddy Ulmer
Publicity Design .....	Nancy LeBlanc, Mike Minor
Publicity .....	Les Hankinson, Don Volk
Box Office .....	Richard Norquist, Mary Philips
Photography .....	Don Wright
Secretary .....	Dorothy Senechal

An indication that the comic style of the great French playwright, Moliere, far outlived that fatal day in 1673 is the nineteenth-century work of Eugene Labiche. With the same farcical vigor as Moliere, though perhaps not with the same acid satire, Labiche was for nearly forty years the most prolific and popular of French playwrights.

Although buffoonery may be the key to the Labiche style, his characters have their roots in truth, as well as in the traditional comic types that go back through Moliere to the pre-Christian era of Roman comedy. Avoiding the dangers (and the meaningfulness) of satire, Labiche's plays are filled with hearty, joyous laughter surrounding an absurdly simple situation. **Horse Eats Hat** was the title of a 1936 New York adaptation of tonight's play, and those three words sum up the background of the normal Labiche conflict. Yet, his manipulation of character and dialogue to provide hilarious extensions to a situation is in the true farcical tradition, and is not so different from the contemporary American styles of Kaufman and Hart or George Kelly.

Labiche wrote 150 farces during his long career, then had the sense to retire to his country estate in Normandy when he felt his popularity waning. A resurgence occurred in 1878-1879, when a ten-volume complete work was published, followed quickly by Labiche's enthusiastic elevation to the French Academy. Membership in this hallowed set of forty immortals of literature, science and politics had been previously denied such lights as Beaumarchais, Dumas, Balzac and Moliere himself.

**An Italian Straw Hat**, written in 1851, is one of those curious French concoctions, the vaudeville—a play with short songs thrown in mainly to circumvent the old law that limited the number of legitimate theaters in Paris. English writer W. S. Gilbert made two very free adaptations of the play at the end of the nineteenth century, **The Wedding March** and **Haste to the Wedding**, naturally inserting his own brand of song. American productions occurred in 1926 and 1936 and a London production in 1952.

Apart from that, almost all other productions have been in college and university theaters, and the name of Labiche is virtually unknown to American audiences. And so, perhaps it is better left to the audience to decide whether Labiche is just a hack farceur, or a worthy wearer of the mantle of Moliere.

—LESTER HARVEY HANKINSON

**COMING IN MAY . . . .**

**Original One-Acts — May 1-5, Masquer Theater**

**Faust — May 16-19, University Theater**

**Montana Repertory Theater—Summer Season begins in June.**

