

# Excellent performances mixed with memorable moments

By Bryan Rivers

**T**HE Cercle Molière opened its latest season Friday night with a very energetic but rather uneven, updated adaptation of Molière's comic classic, *Le Mariage Forcé*.

This was a very appropriate choice with which to launch the Cercle's brand new theatre, located at the Franco-Manitoban Cultural Centre, since the plays of Molière have been a much loved part of the company's repertoire for decades.

The wisdom of adapting the text and turning it into a type of Broadway song-and-dance review might not, however, be to everyone's taste.

The fusion of farce, mime, slapstick, satire and musical comedy felt, at times, like an artistic marriage forcé of radically differing performance idioms with too many transitions of style and focus.

Nevertheless, the cast of twelve threw themselves energetically into the production which was well received by an appreciative and at times vocal audience.

It was particularly encouraging to see the breadth of talent across the generations, which bodes well for the future of the Cercle. Francis Fontaine as the male lead, Sganarelle, is an experienced actor who seems to have a natural affinity for farce. He was well supported by Laura Lussier as Dorimène, his young, scheming bride. Lussier has an impressive repertoire of skills, transitioning effortlessly into the song and dance routines. The choreography, by Brenda Gorlick, is slick, tight and varied and made good use of a rather confined and limiting space.

The set, by Kim Donald-Haverty, is an effective, multi-level design with two symmetrically configured staircases and multiple entrances which gives



SUPPLIED PHOTO

**Le Mariage Forcé, which opened Friday night, is the first production in the new theatre building.**

## TheatreReview

### Le Cercle Molière

- *Le Mariage Forcé*
- October 1-23
- Centre Culturel Franco-Manitobain, 340 rue Provencher

★★★ out of five

a lot of flexibility for the cast. The staircases were well used for some of the songs and the upper level accommodated a duo of musicians who provided live music and musical sound effects.

Molière's famous comic scene of the conflict between two philosophers was particularly

effective. Bertrand Nayet earned some deserved applause as he negotiated the verbal tongue-twisters of seventeenth-century academic terminology, well supported by Bernard Boland as his rival, Marphrius.

The new theatre is an exciting physical environment full of potential with almost limitless flexibility regarding the configuration of seating and stage. For this production, the more intimate, cabaret-style atmosphere of the old Théâtre de la Chapelle was reproduced, but with bleacher-style seating which provided excellent sight-lines from all parts of the auditorium. Visually, it felt like being in a movie theatre watching a 30's style musical

review. There was a festive mood on the part of the audience as we witnessed the start of another era in the life of the company.

This production has music, song, dance, energy and talent. It pulls in the audience, especially towards the close, with its sense of exuberance and sheer fun. The music and lyrics by Daniel Roy could stand alone as satirical pieces and are well integrated into the text. There are excellent individual performances and memorable moments. At the same time, there is perhaps an over-abundance of theatrical styles and genres. The parts overwhelm the whole and, occasionally, energetic borders on the frenetic.