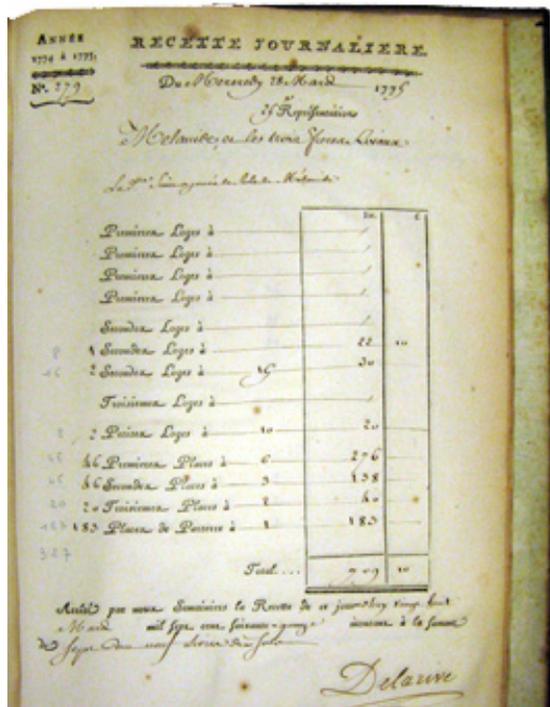# HyperStudio
DIGITAL HUMANITIES AT MIT

Comédie Française Registers Project

MIT HyperStudio explores visualizations for 17th and 18th century French Theatre

Jeffrey Ravel, Associate Professor of History
Kurt Fendt, Director of the HyperStudio

Imagine a cultural historian who is interested in the eighteenth-century performance and reception of *Tartuffe*, Molière's 1667 play on religious hypocrisy. Currently, a browser search on the CESAR web site, the most complete online source for French theater in this period, would yield information on the play's publication, some engraved images of the play, some references to review or police reports related to individual performances, and an incomplete performance record. The researcher would still not know much about eighteenth-century performances of the play.

From 1680 to the present day, however, the Comédie-Française theater troupe in Paris has kept daily records of its repertory, box office receipts, and expenses, as well as additional information on set and costume design, actor's roles, police records, etc. Together, this wealth of information is stored in the archives of the theater troupe on the Palais Royal in Paris. In the fall of 2007, HyperStudio and Dr. Jeffrey Ravel, Associate Professor in History at MIT, initiated the Comédie-Française Registers Project (CFRP), bringing together fellow collaborators at Oxford Brookes University, the University of Paris-X (Nanterre) and the Bibliothèque-Musée de la Comédie-Française.

The CFRP provides access to – and increases the usability of – these unique records for the period between 1680-1800. The creation of a fully searchable online platform, combined with advanced search and visualization tools allows scholars to more readily investigate correlations between public attendance, box office receipts and repertory choices.

It is not hard to imagine how the availability of the data and the tools will dramatically augment the scope of research in the field, its modes of inquiry and the type of research questions that can be answered.

With the Comédie-Française Registers Project (CFRP), the HyperStudio wishes to enhance research in seventeenth and eighteenth century French theater practices. *Tartuffe*, and the hundreds of other plays in the troupe's repertory, will again become dynamic cultural artifacts whose changing reception across the century can be accurately tracked and creatively analyzed.

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