

# Theatre Newsletter

The Department of Dramatic Arts ☺ PAC 1052 ☹ Mobile, Alabama 36688-0002

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## THEATRE USA PRESENTS RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN'S *THE RIVALS*

Considered one of the best of the English Restoration comedies, this hilarious 18th-century satire of mistaken identities and romantic near-misses among a dashing captain, an idealistic heiress, and the blundering Mrs. Malaprop will open Theatre USA's 2002 - 2003 season. This play, about mischievous, unexpected, dangerous and the all compelling power of love is sure to be a hit with our audiences.

*The Rivals* will open Thursday, October 10, at 8:00 pm in the Laidlaw Performing Arts Center Theatre. Additional performances will be on Friday,

October 11, Saturday, October 12, Monday, October 14 at 8:00 pm and Sunday, October 13 at 2:00 pm.

Our production of *The Rivals* is also being performed at the Alabama Conference of Theatre and Speech's State Festival of the Kennedy Center/ American College Theatre Festival. This year's state festival will be held in the Telfair Peet Theatre on the campus of Auburn University. We will be performing on Friday, October 18, at 8:00 pm.

The Alabama State KC/ ACTF festival runs from October 16 - 19. In addition to our production of *The Rivals*, eight other state universities and colleges will be participating with performances daily at 10:00 am and 8:00 pm.

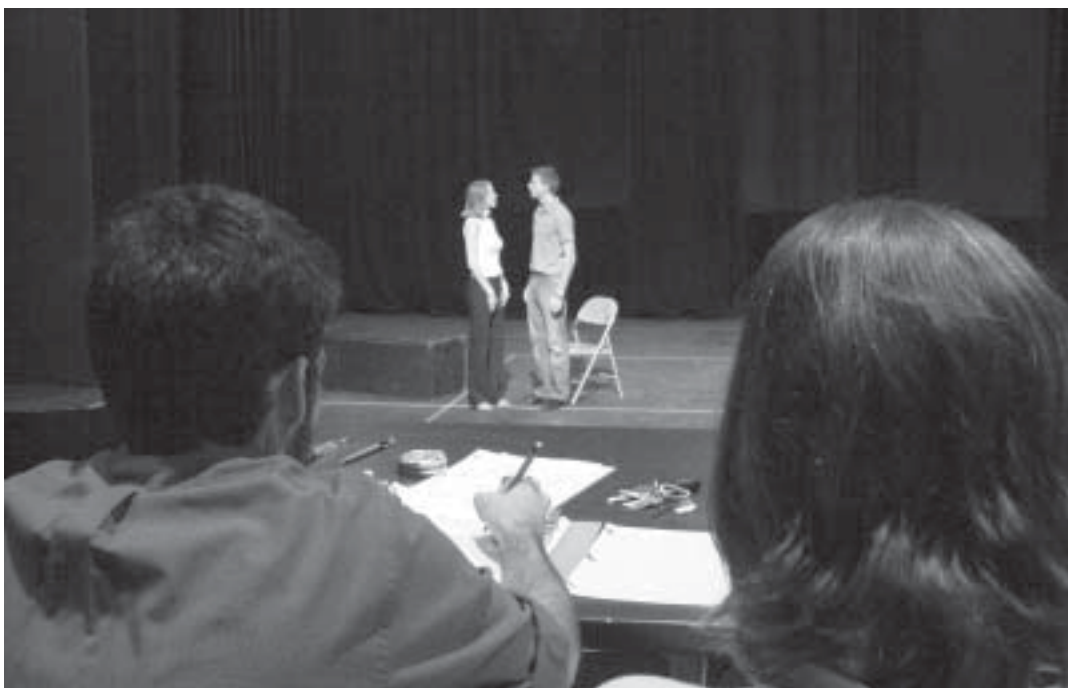
## RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN RESTORATION COMEDIES AND *THE RIVALS*

By the age of twenty-six, Richard Brinsley Sheridan had achieved remarkable successes in both his personal and his professional life. He had married the beautiful Miss Linley with whom he had eloped to France to save her from an unwelcome suitor; he had survived two duels with her frustrated suitor; his first play, *The Rivals*, had been successfully presented at Covent Garden, and later in the same year, 1775, his comic opera, *The Duenna*, began a run that would stretch to an amazing 75 performances; he had bought the well-known Drury Lane theater; and *The School for*

*Scandal*, his most famous play opened there with great success on May 7, 1777. Sheridan's remaining years in the theater were much less noteworthy. He was constantly plagued by debts--running a theater is an expensive business--and he wrote only two more plays: *The Critic* (1779), a witty burlesque of the theatrical process itself, and *Pizarro*, a melodrama adapted from a German source. His interest subsequently turned to politics, and when he died he was given a large public funeral and buried in Westminster Abbey.

*The Rivals* and *The School for Scandal*, Sheridan's two masterpieces, are not only brilliant theatrical works in themselves, but mark an important moment in English comedy--the return of wit and humor to the stage. For most of the eighteenth century, reactions against the so-called "Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage" had turned comedy away from laughter into melodrama filled with moral and emotional appeals. Such drama is usually referred to as "sentimental comedy:"

"In these plays almost all the characters are good and exceedingly generous; and though they want humor, have abundance of sentiment and feeling. If they happen to have faults or foibles, the spectator is taught not only to pardon but to applaud them, in consideration of the goodness of their hearts; so that folly, instead of being ridiculed, is commended, and the comedy aims at



Stage Manager David Mims (front left) records director Jean Galloway's notes in his script, and Assistant Stage Manager Camryn Duff (front right) prompts actors Jessica Allison (left) and Johathan Conner (right) as they rehearse *The Rivals*.

**Artist Spotlight**  
**Lighting Designer**  
**Bonnie Woolley**

When Bonnie Woolley graduated from Baker High School as part of the class of 2000 she knew what she wanted to do the rest of her life. She wanted to do Theatre. She wasn't interested in being an actor. She wanted to make it happen behind the scenes.

"Then it was a little scary. Could I make a living doing this? I got a lot of -Theatre? Right. So what are really going to do?" Her parents "as always" were very supportive and told her to go for it. So she took her first step and entered U.S.A.'s B.F.A. program in Dramatic Arts with an emphasis in Theatre Design and Technology to see where it might lead.

Two and a half years later she has accomplished a lot. She has worked props, built scenery, painted scenery, hung lights, operated the light board and the sound board, designed lights and Stage Managed. She has been Stage Manager for South's productions of *A Doll House*, *Noises Off*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. "Stage Management was a real challenge the first time around. I had the manual so I just kept reading it and trying to stay ahead. It's so important to understand what's happening on stage and off. And each director is different in how they want things done."

*The Rivals* is not her first hand at designing Lights. Last spring she designed lights for the Mobile Theatre Guild's production of *HOT L Baltimore*. *The Rivals* is the first design where I've been in on the production meetings from the beginning. Doing it the way it's suppose to be done." Her design will also be entered in the American College Theatre Festival and she is considering entering in the Southeastern Theatre Conferences' Design Competition.

Last summer her experience with props led her to a summer job with Santa Fe Opera doing just that. The scope of the productions and the budgets of those productions left her a little breathless. "They spent \$100,000 for one piece of hydraulic equipment to create one moment." They want her back next summer but she wants to move into a different position. "I want to be an Electrician. That would be so cool." During the Apprentice Scenes at the end of the summer, she finagled the electricians position and says she's found her true calling. "I always wanted to do hands on artistic things now I know specifically. When I graduate next year I want to go on the road with a professional company as an electrician and see where it takes me."

touching our passions without the power of being truly pathetic."

The spirit of sentimental comedy runs counter to the great tradition of corrective laughter that begins in Greek comedy, finds compelling force in the comedies of Ben Jonson, and dominates the later seventeenth century both in the plays of Moliere and those of the English Restoration playwrights. Sheridan also responded to such "weeping comedy" with his own "laughing comedy," *The Rivals*, which quickly reveals his intentions in the second scene, where he introduces a young woman of markedly sentimental tendencies--so marked, indeed, that they are clearly meant to be a comic caricature. Her name, Lydia Languish, clearly denotes her sentimental excesses, as do the mawkish titles of the books in her library: *The Reward of Constancy*, *The Fatal Connection*, *The Mistakes of the Heart*, and

*The Delicate Mistress*. Although Lydia is the comedy's romantic heroine, she is nonetheless an extremely silly girl, overwhelmed with romantic notions that Sheridan constantly undercuts. The play's genuine humor, however, derives not from the problems of Lydia but from the schemes of her lover, Captain Absolute, who disguises himself to woo her and then experiences the comic complications that result from his double identity. Even more memorable to most audiences are two characters whose language is a perpetual source of comic delight: Bob Acres and Mrs. Malaprop. Acres, a country gentleman, figures in the plot as a rival to Absolute for Lydia's hand, but his real stage function is to amuse the audience with his attempts at fashionable dress and speech. Again Sheridan pokes fun at the excesses of sentiment, for Acres is intent on swearing so that "the oath should be an echo to the sense; and this we call the *oath referential* or sentimental

*swearing*." Even more extreme as a figure of affectation and humor is Mrs. Malaprop, whose name has given the word "malapropism" to our language. Her expressed concern for the correct use of language makes the repeatedly garbled language of her speeches even more ludicrous: "but above all, Sir Anthony, she should be mistress of orthodoxy, that she might not mis-spell and mis-pronounce words so shamefully as girls usually do; and likewise that she might reprehend the true meaning of what she is saying."

--From *Stages of Drama* by Carl H. Klaus, Miriam Gilbert, and Bradford S. Field, Jr.

**Kennedy Center**  
**American College**  
**Theater Festival**

Started in 1969 by Roger L. Stevens, the Kennedy Center's founding chairman, the Kennedy Center American

College Theater Festival (KCACTF) is a national theater program, involving 18,000 students from colleges and universities nationwide, which has served as a catalyst in improving the quality of college theater in the United States. The KCACTF has grown into a network of more than 600 academic institutions throughout the country, where theater departments and student artists showcase their work and receive outside assessments by KCACTF respondents.

The goals of the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival are:

\* to encourage, recognize, and celebrate the finest and most diverse work produced in university and college theater programs;

\* to provide opportunities for participants to develop their theater skills and insight; and achieve professionalism;



Margarette Joyner (left) and Jamie Englehart (right) make the final alterations on the costume they built for Ashley Verneuille's, *Lydia, Act II*, costume. Pictured right, Rebecca Britton's rendering of the costume.



## From the Director Jean Galloway

*The Rivals*, Richard Brinsley Sheridan's comedy of manners blends the wit of the Restoration with the sensibility of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The play affectionately satirizes fashionable society with its materialism, gossip, and hypocrisy. With such lines as "a circulating

library in a town is as an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge," *The Rivals* became one of Sheridan's most popular comedies.

The approach to the production mixes the conceptual with the realistic. The conceptual set is comprised of tapestries that reflect the subject matter of fables popular during the period. The costumes, realistic of 1775, are an integral part of a production of the Restoration. The affections, postures and hypocrisy of the comedy of manners rely in part on the rigid and prescribed attire of the day.

Of course, all aspects of the production are designed to support the witty repartee and heightened language that define Restoration Comedy.

## The Cast for *The Rivals*

Sir Anthony Absolute .....  
 ..... David Schweitzer  
 Capt. Jack Absolute .....  
 ..... Kenneth Kudulis  
 Faulkland ..... Jonathan Conner  
 Bob Acres ..... Jared Peregoy  
 Sir Lucius O'Trigger .....  
 ..... Mason Merrill  
 Fag ..... Jameel Lewis  
 David ..... Kyle Greer  
 Thomas ..... Paul Thomas  
 Mrs. Malaprop .....  
 ..... Lindsay Porter  
 Lydia Languish .....  
 ..... Ashley Verneuille  
 Julia ..... Jessica Allison  
 Lucy ..... Leah deButts

\* to improve the quality of college and university theater in America;

\* to encourage colleges and universities to give distinguished productions of new plays, especially those written by students; the classics, revitalized or newly conceived; and experimental works.

Through state, regional, and national festivals, KCACTF participants celebrate the creative process, see one another's work, and share

experiences and insights within the community of theater artists. The KCACTF honors excellence of overall production and offers student artists individual recognition through awards and scholarships in playwriting, acting, criticism, directing, and design.

Since its inception, KCACTF has given more than 400,000 college theater students

the opportunity to have their works critiqued, improve their dramatic skills and receive national recognition for excellence. More than 16 million theatergoers have attended approximately 10,000 festival productions nationwide.

## Ticket & Box Office Information

Phone (251) 460-6306

Tickets for Theatre USA Production of *The Rivals*

General Admission \$10.00 Students\* \$ 7.00

The Box Office will be open starting Monday, September, 30 from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday thru Friday and one hour before each performance at the Laidlaw Performing Arts Center Box Office. Tickets are sold on a first come first served bases. All seats reserved. All sales final. No refunds or exchanges.

\* Student tickets available for all students with valid ID. One ticket per ID.

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## COMING IN DECEMBER

## *Eager Beaver Builds a Dam*

By R. E. Jackson

at the USA Wright Auditorium  
 December 4 at  
 7:00pm



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A detailed black and white engraving-style illustration of a theatrical scene. It shows several figures in 18th-century attire, including a man in a top hat and a woman in a long dress, in what appears to be a grand interior setting with ornate furniture and architectural details.

The Department of Dramatic Arts  
Theatre USA  
Presents

Richard Brinsley Sheridan's

# THE RIVALS

A Restoration Comedy

October 10, 11, 12 and 14 at 8:00 pm  
and

October 13 at 2:00 pm

Laidlaw Performing Arts Center Theatre  
on the Main Campus of the University of South Alabama