

A publication for our valued theatre patrons

Volume 5 , No. 4

## THEATRE USA PRESENTS SCAPIN

Theatre USA will present Bill Irwin & Mark O'Donnell's adaption of Molière's *Scapin* April 21- 23 & 27 - 29.

In the play, the crafty Scapin, servant to the household of Geronte, jumps into the story as he first promises to help in the affairs of his neighbor's son, Octave, then to aid in those of his own charge, Leander (Geronte's son). Both young men have fallen in love with unlikely and penniless beauties, and both need money to help solve their dilemmas. Scapin knows a good ruse will always win the day and he drafts Sylvestre, Octave's servant, into his schemes. Convincing Sylvestre he's a wonderful actor (and allowing him to build characterizations using movie cliches), Scapin has him play characters who will deceive the family patriarchs into parting with large sums of money. The final scene of the first act is a vaudeville/music hall version of Molière's famous scene in which Scapin spins a tale of kidnapping, foreigners and ransom. Once the money is obtained, however, Scapin pushes further in order to exact a

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MARK O'DONNELL



JEAN BAPTISTE DE POQUELIN

## BILL IRWIN AND MARK O'DONNELL

Bill Irwin was born 11 April 1950, in Santa Monica, California, the oldest of three children born to Horace and Elizabeth Irwin. He was raised in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Southern California. He spent a year in Belfast, Northern Ireland, as an exchange student. He is a graduate in theatre arts from Oberlin College, OH and a graduate of Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey's Clown College, FL. Mr. Irwin met his wife, Martha Roth, actress-turned-nurse midwife, when he went to her for treatment of a stiff neck. Their son, Santos Patrick Morales Irwin, was born in 1991.

Bill Irwin was an original member of Kraken, a theatre company directed by Herbert Blau, and was also an original member of the Pickle Family Circus of San Francisco where he worked with Larry Pisoni and Geoff Hoyle. He has appeared as a guest artist with the ODC Dance Company of San Francisco, which first produced his original work. His own pieces, often produced with Doug Skinner and Michael O'Connor, include *Not Quite / New York*, *The Courtroom* and *The Regard of Flight* (PBS, Great Performances). Skinner, Irwin and O'Connor have performed *The Regard of Flight* on and off Broadway, across the U.S. and in Sydney, Australia. *Largely New York*, Irwin's original work, was developed at The Seattle

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## MOLIÈRE (JEAN BAPTISTE DE POQUELIN)

The life of Molière (1621-1673) is a story of struggle, hard work, domestic unhappiness, death and burial in obscurity and almost in shame. In time, he belongs between Corneille and Racine, but he died before either of them. His birth is obscure. At school he seems to have become acquainted with many Latin, Spanish, and Italian comedies. In his poverty he associated with low companions, and at one time he acted as valet in the household of the king. At about the age of twenty-two he became an actor and manager; but for a time he was wholly unsuccessful. One theatrical enterprise after another failed, and in 1645 he was imprisoned for debt. After being released, he gathered together a group of actors and left Paris for a tour of the provinces — a tour which lasted about ten years.

In 1658 Molière brought his company of actors to Paris and played for the first time in the presence of the king, Louis XIV, in the guard room of the old Louvre. The pieces presented were

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BILL IRWIN

## Artist Spotlight Stage Manager Chrysti Bruch

Like most Theatre USA Theatre majors, junior Chrysti Bruch is always busy. This semester more than most. This has been her “Stage Management” intensive. One of our most experienced student Stage Managers (*Cover of Life, Big River*) she is serving as SM for both *Hedda Gabler* and *Scapin* as part of a Directed Studies class which involved a tutorial with Equity Stage Manager Melissa Nissen.

Originally from Montgomery, she applied to USA after graduation from St. James High School to seek a degree preparing her for a career as a Director, Lighting Designer or Stage Manager. “That was the original plan, but somewhere along the way I decided college was not for me. I decided to go for it in New York.” She moved there, got a job to pay the rent, (waiting tables at Katina’s Diner in Brooklyn and Pizzeria Uno) and went looking for work. And she did find work. “I was ASM at the Women’s Shakespeare Co. for *‘Tis A Pity She’s a Whore*, the all female Rock Opera Version. It was a train wreck from the very beginning. Then I was the Light and Sound Board Operator at the Rattlestick Theatre New Works in the West Village for *My Special Friend*, a gay comedy which was refreshing. Not a tragedy.” The most professional company she was involved with was the American Globe Theatre where she worked on *Macbeth*. “I’d like to go back to New York sometime when I have more training. There’s so much going on there. I was there for almost a year. I loved it, but I just couldn’t afford to live there any more.” So once again it was decision time. “I was still within my two year application date here at South so I thought ‘Why not!’”

By the time she got to South Chrysti was pretty much zeroing in on training to be a Stage Manager. Her organization and management skills came to the foreground. She quickly became the SM everyone wanted for their show. “I really enjoy working on the smaller shows like *Cover of Life* and *Hedda Gabler*. The logistics of a show the size of *Big River* however are a nightmare. You have to be organized if you even hope to keep up with everything.”

A good student, she is successfully working her way through the B.F.A. in Theatre Design and Technology including the Lighting Design class she took last Fall. That class sparked her early interest in Lighting and Electrics. Then, while at the Southeastern Theatre Conference in Orlando the first week in March, she found herself drawn to the Lighting Design Exhibits. “I remembered how much I loved Technology. I mean I really just like Lighting Design. It’s amazing. It’s so cool. Sooo... I’ve decided that *Scapin* is my last Stage Management for awhile. I want to spend my last year concentrating on Lighting Design. I’m hoping to design next year as much as possible and then head to an MFA program with a professional theatre company like at FSU or Tennessee-Knoxville, or who knows maybe NYU.”

### Irwin & O’Donnell from page 1

Repertory Theater City Center and The Kennedy Center, ran on Broadway, and received five Tony nominations as well as Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle, and New York Dance and Performance awards.

He appeared at the Public Theater in Beckett’s *Texts for Nothing* directed by Joe Chaikin, and as Trinculo in *The Tempest* with Patrick Stewart, directed by George Wolfe (1995), also in *Waiting for Godot* at Lincoln Center with Steve Martin, Robin Williams, and F. Murray Abraham.

On TV, he has appeared on “Saturday Night Live,” “The Tonight Show,” “The Cosby Show,” HBO’s “Bette Midler, Mondo Beyondo,” CBS’s “Northern Exposure,” PBS’s “Great Performances” and, with great pride, on “Sesame Street.” In Britain, he appeared on BBC’s “Paul Daniels Magic Show.” His film credits include the Robert Altman movie *Popeye*, Alan Alda’s *A New Life*, John Sayles’ *Eight Men Out*, Herb Ross’ *My Blue Heaven*, and Paul Mazursky’s *Scenes From a Mall*. Mr. Irwin also appears in *Stepping Out* with Liza Minnelli, in Jim Abraham’s *Hot Shots* and in *Silent Tongue*, written and directed by Sam Shepard.

In 1981 and 1983, Mr. Irwin was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts Choreographer’s Fellowship and in 1984 was named a Guggenheim Fellow and awarded a five-year MacArthur Fellowship. He gratefully acknowledges these awards.

Mark O’Donnell’s book received the 2003 Tony Award for *Hairspray*. Plays include *That’s It, Folks!*; *Fables for Friends*; *The Nice*

### THE COMMEDIA DELL’ARTE OF THE 1600’S



and the *Nasty* (all at Playwrights Horizons); *Strangers on Earth*; *Vertigo Park*; and the book and lyrics for the musical *Tots in Tinseltown*. He collaborated with Bill Irwin on an adaptation of Molière’s *Scapin* and co-authored a translation of Feydeau’s *A Flea in Her Ear*, both for the Roundabout. For MTC he translated Jean Claude Carrière’s *La Terrasse*. His books include “Elementary Education” and “Vertigo Park” and “Other Tall Tales”, as well as two novels, “Getting Over Homer” and “Let Nothing You Dismay” (both in Vintage paperback). His humor has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic* and *Spy*,

among others. He has received a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Lecomte du Nuoy Prize and the George S. Kaufman Award.

### Scapin from page 1

little revenge on those he’s served. Thinking Geronte has said something nasty about him, Scapin sets out to teach him a lesson. The roguish words, however, are Scapin’s own lies and stories finally coming back to him, his revenge backfires and he must flee. In the end however, Scapin’s schemes aid in revealing the penniless beauties to be the exact right mates for the young charges—being of high birth after all since they are discovered to be the missing children of both patriarchs—and Scapin returns to his post, with the pleasant punishment of having to marry the maidservant of one of the daughters. There is a final chase and dance among all the participants, which, inevitably, becomes the raucous, delightful curtain call.

# NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

## MATT AMES

In 2001-2002, my first full school year as a faculty member here in the Dramatic Arts Department at South Alabama, I directed a production of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Designers Lyle Miller and Rebecca Britton and I decided to set the production in a kind of unidentifiable non-place in order to emphasize the timeless nature of Shakespeare's writings. We are attempting a similar concept with *Scapin* adapted by Tony Award-winning actor and "New Vaudevillian" Bill Irwin and humorist Mark O'Donnell from Moliere's original work.

Our take on *Scapin*, however, is slightly different. Irwin and O'Donnell have created a very fluid script, which allows itself to be adjusted to fit the theater, audience and times of whatever group has chosen to stage the show. This version works in any time period and in any place. In *Romeo and Juliet*, we created a world that was not tied to any particular era or locale in history, but was cohesive unto itself. This time we are pulling on iconography from the latter half of the American twentieth century; specifically pop music icons of the seventies and eighties, the early part of the same century; specifically the silent film era, and a number of other eras and locations.

Molière was a brilliant satirist who used the politics of his time, as well as the politics within his own theater community, to make great comedy. He also culled ideas from the iconography of the past, using the traditions of Plautus and commedia dell'arte to establish relationships and create comic situations in his own works, including *Les Fourbieres de Scapin*. What attracted me to this script was the opportunity to create a great piece of comic entertainment while simultaneously schooling myself and my students in the history of comedy since the 1600s. The "iconography," the mechanics of comedy have changed very little since the *The Menachmae*, a Roman Comedy about twins and mistaken identity, and you will see many of stock comic situations in play here: hidden and discovered identities, authority figures getting their comeuppance, and comic duos made up of sensible straight men and their thickheaded sidekicks. The jokes are rarely subtle here, but after hundreds of years, they still work. They just have to be dusted off a little, and contextualized so that you and I can recognize them.

Enjoy the show!

### TICKET & BOX OFFICE INFORMATION PHONE (251)-460-6306

Tickets for Theatre USA's Production of *SCAPIN*  
General Admission \$12.00 Faculty/ Staff \$10.00  
Students \* \$8.00

The Box Office will open Monday April 10. Box Office Hours 9:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday through Friday and one hour before each performance.

The Box Office is located in the lobby of the Laidlaw Performing Arts Center on the main campus of The University of South Alabama. Tickets are sold first come first served. All seats reserved. All sales final. No refund or exchange.

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



TRADITIONAL 1600'S COSTUME  
FOR THE CHARACTER SCAPIN



REBECCA BRITTON'S COSTUME FOR  
THE CHARACTER SCAPIN

## CAST FOR SCAPIN

Argante ..... Sean Alexander  
Geronte .....  
..... Adam Andrianopoulos  
Sylvestre ..... Carly York  
Scapin ..... Jason Peregoy  
Nerine ..... Allison Love

Octave .... Patrick McNerney  
Hyacinth .....  
..... Maria Wojciechowski  
Leander ..... Brad Bryant  
Zerbinette ..... Joy Ward  
Messengers/Gendarmes/Porters  
..... Tania Morris Diaz  
..... Josh Scarcliff  
..... Holly Ladnier  
..... John Cardy

### Molière from page 1

Corneille's *Nicomède*, and *Docteur Amoureux*, by Molière himself. Fortunately, on this return to the capital Molière's sense of humor was tickled by the absurdities of the salons and the literary ladies whose chief aim in life was to promote culture; and the production of *Les Précieuses Ridicules* (*The Pretentious Young Ladies*) in 1659 proved the turning point in his career. It was his first attempt to handle real life as it was in Paris of his own day. Madame de Rambouillet was dead; but the literary cult which she had established was still very much the fashion. Molière seized upon the affected speech, the elegant gallantries and the learned sentimentality of the précieuses and caricatured them with infinite skill. Even the blue-stockings and the gallants were obliged to laugh at themselves. *Les Précieuses Ridicules* was an immediate success, and encouraged its author to believe that contemporary life was his true field.

From that time on Molière gradually perfected his style, though as manager he continued to produce the plays of intrigue and roystering adventure which were characteristic of the older school. In his own plays he created a new genre, attacking not only the sentimental blue-stockings and the vapid swains of the salon, but nobles, actors, priests, doctors, Corneille and the high-flown writers of his class together with the plays of the rival theater — anybody and everybody afforded a target for his laughter-provoking shafts. He was not only dramatist but also chief actor in his company, and as comedian he must have had extraordinary gifts. While acting in his last play, *Le Malade Imaginaire*, in 1673, he was seized with an attack of coughing which proved to be the forerunner of his death. He was denied the sacrament of the Church, and grudgingly allowed Christian burial. During the following century his bust was placed in the Academy, and a monument erected over his grave.



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Laidlaw Performing  
Arts Center

# Scapin



April 21-22 7:30 pm  
April 23 2:00 pm  
April 27-29 7:30 pm

**Ticket Information**  
460-6306

Adapted from Moliere  
by Bill Irwin & Mark O'Donnell