



Denver Center
Theatre Company

Inside Out

A STUDY GUIDE

PRODUCED BY THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

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THE RIVALS

The entire action takes place in Bath, England, the fashionable watering place of the British aristocracy. Here gathered the cream of society. The British moral sense was well-satisfied at this resort since it was clearly a duty of the governing class to keep fit and healthy by drinking and immersing in the medicinal waters at the baths. These were the same baths built by the Romans. There was also decorum and elegance in the concerts, games, dances and parties they attended, together with the intellectual delight of conversing in the open air of the splendid promenades or "parades" which had been constructed.

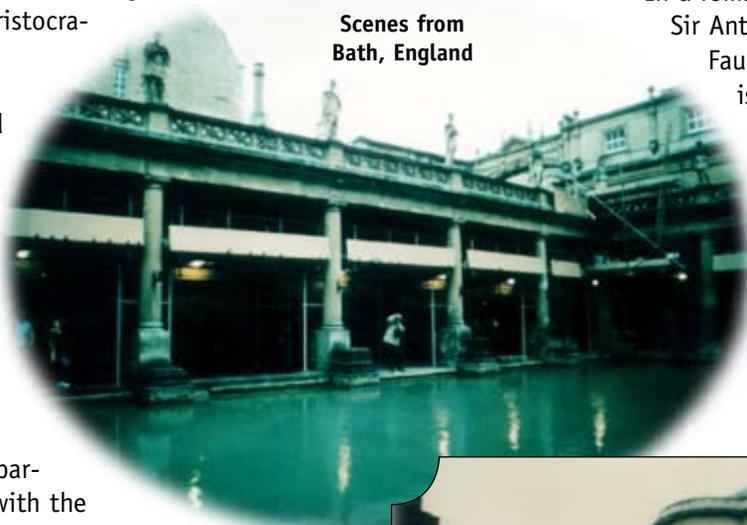
In Bath, 1775, a young army captain, Jack Absolute, poses as a half-pay ensign, Ensign Beverley, to pursue the high-spirited heiress, Lydia Languish. She is 17, rich and a dream-bound reader of current romances and, because she lives in a haze of romantic rapture, Lydia despises money, position and conventional marriage. However the reality is that she will forfeit most of her fortune if she marries without the consent of her aunt. Her aunt is Mrs. Malaprop of mind boggling vocabulary bending skills. In Lydia's caprice she defies her aunt's authority, intending to forfeit her fortune for the love of Beverley, whose poverty and passion gratify her sense of romance.

But while Captain Jack plies this whimsical Beverley disguise, his father, Sir Anthony, proposes him (in his real identity) to Lydia's aunt as a suitable husband for Lydia.

Thereby, he makes Jack his own rival. Two other suitors are also present: a country bumpkin named Bob Acres (ironically a good friend of Jack's who imagines himself wronged by "Beverley") and Sir Lucius O'Trigger, a petulant Irish baron who is Mrs. Malaprop's romantic target but who also feels he's been insulted by Captain Absolute.

In a romantic subplot, Julia Melville, Sir Anthony's ward, is in love with Faulkland, a sentimental humorist with a neurotic personality. When told that Julia has been smiling and cheerful during his absence, Faulkland's amorous hypochondria causes him to question Julia's loyalty in such bizarre ways that she finally dismisses him.

Scenes from
Bath, England



PHOTOS BY ALAN GASS

When Lydia at last discovers Jack's true identity, she rejects him and pouts to think of forfeiting their planned romantic elopement. Jack is pained by this rejection but he is forced into a duel (as both Beverley and Jack) by the "insulted" Bob Acres and O'Trigger. Jack asks Faulkland to serve as his second. When the servants tell Lydia, Julia and Mrs. Malaprop the confused details of the impending duel, the ladies rush to the field to prevent (in Mrs. Malaprop's butchered description), "the fine suicide, paracide, salvation, and antistrophe." All ends as it should in this play of clever wit, ingenious characters and hearty fun. ■



The Student Matinee program
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THE PLAYWRIGHT Richard Brinsley Sheridan

“It was an age of orators and actors.”¹

In 1751, Richard Brinsley Sheridan was born in Dublin, Ireland, the birthplace of George Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde. Although known as a playwright, Sheridan actually had four careers during his lifetime (playwright; manager and part-owner of the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, London; Parliamentary Member for Stafford and prominent Whig; and as a man of fashion and friend of the First Gentlemen of Europe). As a matter of fact, most of his playwriting days were over by the time he was 25 years old.

In his early years, Sheridan's father, Thomas, was an actor and theatre manager and his mother, Francis, a playwright and novelist. He attended grammar school in Dublin until 1762 when he attended Harrow School in England. He was miserable and lonely there, so when his family moved to London in 1770, he joined them and pursued his studies with his father as mentor.

Thomas Sheridan became head of the Academy of Oratorios at Bath and the entire family moved there. In Bath, Richard met the 17-year-old beauty and celebrated soprano, Elizabeth Linley. She was musically precocious and of fragile health. Elizabeth inspired obsessive attachments and at the age of 16 was contracted to marry a 60-year-old squire named Walter Long, but Long, for some reason, dissolved the contract by paying her father and giving Elizabeth some family jewels. The event was publicized and became the plot of Samuel Foote's play, *The Maid of Bath*. To add insult to injury, Captain Thomas Mathews, a married man, forced his attentions upon Elizabeth, telling her he would ruin her virtue and/or her reputation. Elizabeth confided in young Richard and they decided to elope to France in March, 1772, where she would

stay in a convent until Mathews stopped provoking her.

By the end of April, Elizabeth and Richard were back in England. However, Mathews felt his honor was assailed by a letter Richard wrote him. In a duel at Covent Garden in London, Richard bested him and forced Mathews to apologize. But Mathews revoked the apology he had given and this led to a second duel at Kingsdown near Bath. Richard was disarmed and severely wounded by Mathew's slashes to his neck and chest. Mathews fled to France; Elizabeth cared for Richard and they were married for the second time on April 12, 1773.

The couple moved to London where Elizabeth held musicales and Richard began to write plays. *The Rivals*, written in 1774, was presented in January, 1775, followed by *St. Patrick's Day* (a farce), *The Duenna* (comic opera), *The School for Scandal* in 1777 and *The Critic* in 1779. In 1776, Richard, James Ford, and Thomas Linley bought David Garrick's half of the Drury Lane Theatre. Richard became business manager. The theatre lost money because of poor management and debts incurred by closing for reconstruction in 1791.

In 1780 Sheridan entered the House of Commons. He championed freedom of the press, abolition of slavery and Catholic emancipation. He defended Home Rule, challenged

English coercion of the Irish Parliament and hailed the French Revolution as a blow for freedom. Hence, he was a radical liberal which did not endear him with the conservative pragmatism of statesman Edmund Burke. However, his oratorical skills were outstanding. He was adept at sifting out flaws in opponents' arguments; his speeches were well-prepared and full of wit and humor.

In 1792 wife Elizabeth died, followed shortly thereafter by his young daughter.

Though Drury Lane Theatre reopened in 1794 and he remarried in 1795 to Hester Jane Ogle, events did not go smoothly. In 1799 he wrote and presented the play *Pizarro* at the Drury Lane. This went unheralded and he was plagued by creditors. In 1809 the Drury Lane burned down leaving him almost penniless. In 1812 he lost the election to the

House of Commons and one year later, he was imprisoned for debt. Sheridan died in 1816 and is buried in Poets' Corner at Westminster Abbey. ■

“Thou art a friend indeed and my only request shall be that you continue to love me and look on my imperfections with more affection than judgment.”

Richard Brinsley Sheridan,
Pizarro.



THE TIME OF THE PLAY IS 1775

IN AMERICA

The American Revolution was just beginning.
Paul Revere rode from Charleston to Lexington to warn the populace "The British are coming."
The Patriots defeated the British at Lexington.
Americans conquered Ft. Ticonderoga, New York and Crown Point.
The Second Continental Congress assembled at Philadelphia.
The British won at Bunker Hill.
George Washington was made Commander in Chief of American forces.

IN ENGLAND

Edmund Burke was making a speech, "On Conciliation with America" while the country hired 29,000 German mercenaries for war in North America.
In art, Joshua Reynolds painted *Miss Bowles*, while George Romney was becoming fashionable in London as a portrait painter.
In literature, Samuel Johnson wrote *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* the same year that novelist Jane Austen was born.
In science, James Watt perfected his invention, the steam engine.
James Cook returned from his second voyage looking for Antarctica.

IN FRANCE

Beaumarchais was writing *The Barber of Seville*, while Mozart, the man who was to collaborate with him on *The Marriage of Figaro*, was writing the opera *La Finta Giardiniera*, an opera buffa, in Salzburg.
Bread shortages and a poor harvest cause violent unrest to break out. ■

THE CHARACTERS

Sergeant-at-law: in the Prologue, a member in upper hierarchy of the legal profession.
An attorney: in the Prologue, the lawyer representing the author
Thomas: countrified coachman serving Sir Anthony Absolute
Fag: dandified servant of Sir Anthony's sophisticated son, Jack
Lydia Languish: sentimental young lady of fashion
Lucy: scheming maid of Lydia's aging aunt, Mrs. Malaprop
Julia: Lydia's sensible cousin, ward of Sir Anthony

Mrs. Malaprop: Lydia's fabulously fatuous aunt
Sir Anthony Absolute: wealthy country gentleman of very conservative ideas
Captain Jack Absolute: his handsome, dashing son
Faulkland: the Captain's friend and Julia's neurotic suitor
Bob Acres: a young country neighbor of the Absolutes, and another suitor of Lydia
Sir Lucius O'Trigger: flamboyant Irish nobleman, bold but bankrupt
David: Bob Acres' timid servant

THE WORD-BLUNDERS OF MRS. MALAPROP

Mrs. Malaprop knows a great many hard words but doesn't have a very good ear in applying them. Her usage of words for others similar in sound must be a suggestive list and not mathematically correct. In each column, the first word is the malapropism, or misuse of words; the second is the correction or, at least, an approximation.

Accommodation—recommendation.

Affluence—influence
Analyzed—paralyzed
Antistrophe—catastrophe
Caparison—comparisons
Compilation—appellation
Commotion—emotion
Conjunction—injunction
Contagious—contiguous
Delusions—allusions
Derangement—arrangement
Dissolve—disclose? solve?
Enveloped—developed
Epitaphs—epithets
Exploded—exposed?
Extirpate—exculpate?
extricate?
Felicity—velocity? celerity?
Harry Mercury—the *Herald Mercury*
Hydrostatics—hysterics
Illegible—ineligible
Illiterate—obliterate
Illuminate—elucidate
Incentive—instinctive
Induction—seduction
Ineffectual—intellectual
Ingenuity—ingenuousness
Intricate—obstinate
Malevolence—benevolence
Meretricious—meritorious?
Oracular—vernacular
Particle—article
Participate—precipitate
Perpendiculars—particulars

Persisted—desisted
Pineapple—pinnacle
Preposition—proposition
Profane—profuse?
Punctuation—punctilio?
Reprehend—apprehend
Similitude—simile
Supercilious—superficial
Superfluous—superficial
Superstitious—superfluous

Sheridan, Richard Brinsley. *The Rivals* ed. *The Rivals*. San Francisco, CA:



LIFE IN GEORGIAN ENGLAND

“A society without an aristocracy, without an elite minority, is not a society.”

Jose Ortega y Gasset,
Invertebrate Spain, 1922.

The society of 1770's England was based upon quite rigid class distinctions which were generally accepted as right and necessary. At the top of English society were the few nobility consisting of 174 English Peers in the 1770s. Their order of rank and importance was the Royal Family, then

Great Officers of the State, followed by Dukes, Marquesses, Earls, Viscounts and Barons. Wives of Peers were Duchesses, Marchionesses, Countesses, Viscountesses and Baronesses.

The second class of nobility were Baronets, Knights and Country Gentlemen, also called the gentry. Most of the characters in the play, except for the servants, were of this class. Their land was the source of their wealth and power, and their diaries and letters spoke of building, knocking down and rebuilding. They and their families monopolized all political power through the House of Peers, the Church of England and the highest ranks of the Armed Forces. Primogeniture (legal system of inheritance by the eldest son) kept titles, wealth and estates securely in place for the most part. Younger sons were found positions in the Church or

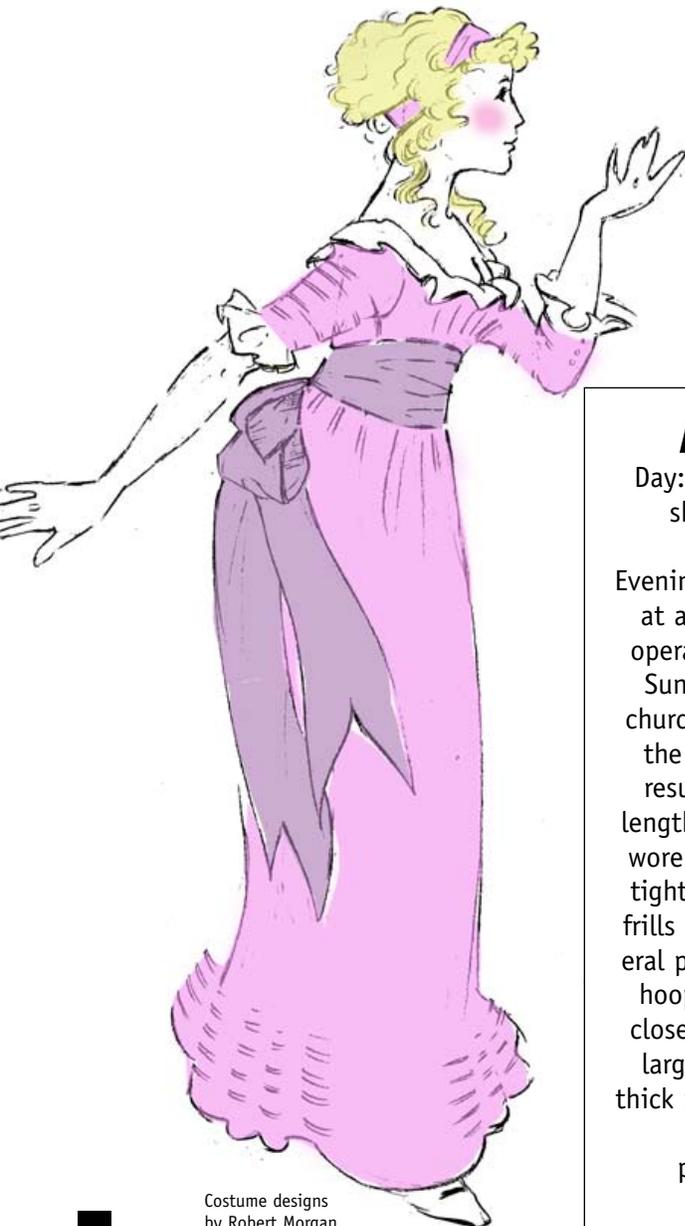
The objective was to secure an eligible husband and maintain one's position in society. A woman was expected to be submissive and not too well read.

professions.

It was a closed society with marriage as the only means of entry. Nobles would marry heiresses to great fortunes or merchants would wed titled widows. This trend alarmed the upper classes and in the 1770s, they were closing ranks. If you were an aristocrat, then you belonged to the Whig political party, the party of aristocracy until 1850.

The gentry ranged from crude country squires (like Bob Acres) to urbane and courtly gentlemen. Their land holdings were smaller than the aristocrats and their political offices ranged from Justice of the Peace to a member of the House of Commons. They were very active on local levels with taxation, justice and management of affairs in their county. The gentry generally belonged to the Tory party (later called the Conservatives), a party in opposition to the Whigs.

When in the city, aristocrats liked to play billiards, tennis, chess; go ice-skating, lawn bowling or dancing; attend the opera, theatre, costume balls; engage in gambling, clubbing and witness public executions at the Tyburn (this only happened eight times a year). On their estates in the



Costume designs
by Robert Morgan

A Lady's Day

Day: call on friends, relatives, shop, fittings for wig or dress or play cards.

Evening: dinner party at home or at a friend's home, go to the opera or attend a court dance.

Sunday: rise early and go to church. The limited schedule of the Lady may have been the result of the complexity and length of her dressing time. She wore elaborate silk gowns with tight-fitting bodices framed in frills and laces put on over several petticoats and a whalebone hoop. Her hair was frizzed or closely curled and piled over a large pad and whitened with thick powder. Her face was heavily creamed and also plastered with powder.

country, they participated in fox, rabbit, deer and bear hunting and partridge shooting. Fishing was important, as well as bear, badger and bull baiting. Boxing, cricket, cock-fighting and football were enjoyed. Football in the 1770s was played with an inflated goat stomach or small hard ball for nine snatches (goals.) The game was played in teams of nine and the kicking or throwing of the ball was allowed.

Aristocratic sons were educated at home by private tutors. In the 1770s, however, more and more young men were being sent off to Eton, Harrow, and Westminster with a curriculum of classical studies of literature, grammar, Greek, rhetoric and manners. An aristocrat's education included the Grand Tour. He was driven through the principal European countries in a post chaise accompanied by a tutor and hopefully learned a foreign language (particularly French) while acquiring taste and fashionable manners. Exposure to collections of art and sculpture supposedly gave one style and polish. In 1775 archeological ruins were popular, so everyone flocked to visit the ruins of Pompeii.

Daughters were brought up under the care of a governess. Expectations were low and girls were taught a little mathematics, some classical litera-

The society of 1770's England was based upon quite rigid class distinctions which were generally accepted as right and necessary.

ture, music, dancing and deportment. The objective was to secure an eligible husband and maintain one's position in society. A woman was expected to be submissive and not too well read.

The diet of the upper classes approached gluttony. Their tables groaned under platters laden with every kind of fish, fowl and meat imaginable. Salads consisted of lettuce, roots and pot-herbs and fresh cream, butter and cheese were available. Meals were six to 12 courses in length and it was not unusual for a dinner party to include 200 items. Rhubarb was introduced in the 1770s and was considered a delicacy, but one could also have sugared almonds, chocolate cake, tarts, dried apricots, cheesecake and trifle.

As for manners, Lord Chesterfield wrote many let-

ters to his son about morals and manners, urging him to imitate the perfections of good company: "Copy their politeness, their carriage, their address, and the easy and well-bred turn of their conversations."⁷ But the stiff upper lip had not yet become part of the character of an English gentleman. Men wept on the floor of the House of Commons and an insult or slight could produce a blaze of anger, a sound thrashing, a duel or a blistering speech of foul language. Brutality and licentiousness mingled with the appearance of polish and politeness.

The privileges and pleasures of the upper class were slowly being whittled away by the rise of the middle class.

Continued on page 6

A Gentleman's Day

9AM: eating and dressing (with the aid of a valet).
 11AM: go to coffee or chocolate house in a sedan chair, even though such houses are about five blocks away.
 Noon: to a club.
 1PM: stroll in the park or pleasure garden to show off clothes to the Ladies of the Season. Assignment for the evening can be made there without much difficulty or loss of position (the Ladies of the Season being no ladies and beneath the man's position).
 2-6PM: dinner, then off to the theatre or the opera. Italian opera is in fashion and all should go masked; this lends an air of intrigue and licenses improper behavior without fear of consequence, or off to a gaming house or casino for a game of faro, dice or whist, the forerunner of bridge. A late supper at another noble's house with port and cigar tops off the evening.



Costume designs
by Robert Morgan

The middle class were described as “comprising all those families whose income came from some non-manual occupation but who, by way of their life and attitude of mind, had no claims to be ranked with the gentry.”⁸ In the countryside they were the millers, innkeepers and farmers who had between 100 and 500 acres of land. In the towns, they were the lawyers, physicians, civil servants, clergymen, soldiers, sailors, architects and school-masters. At the top of the heap were the merchant princes and large manufacturers. With work taking the predominant part of the middle-class male’s day, there was little time for diversion. However, the urban dwellers did visit their coffee houses and took excursions to the country on Saturday.

The middle-class diet included vegetables and meat, especially poultry and fowl. Treacle (molasses) was used in many dishes and beverages, and milk was readily available, especially in the countryside. Goose was saved for festive occasions as was rack of beef. The weekly fare might include scrog of mutton (sheep’s neck), oxtails, pork shoulder, meat pie stuffed with rice or vegetables, and rashers of bacon supplemented with bread and available greens.

Sons in middle-class families attended grammar school to prepare for a professional career. Their courses included mathematics, geography and Latin. Middle-class girls were taught reading, writing, lace-making and cooking as befitted their stations. As in the upper class, the girls were being trained to find and please a husband.

Despite their diversity, the members of the middle class had much in common, especially those who had improved their own circumstances. They believed in hard work, discipline, frugality and order. They thought the lavish spending of the upper class was self-indulgent; they resented the inefficiency and undemocratic nature of the country’s governmental institutions and became supporters of efforts to reform them.

They encouraged the suppression of fairs and wakes, brothels, ale-hous-

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es, cock-fighting and bull-baiting. At home, dancing, theatre, laughter, light conversation and leisure were avoided like the plague. They wanted “a more ordered, hard-working, decent and just society based on industry, thrift and goodness.”⁹

By far the greatest part of the population were the craftsmen, laborers, farmers, domestic servants and paupers who made up the lower class. They generally lived a brutal life filled with harsh conditions, long hours of work and few chances for a better life. Their diversions were generally drink-centered, with cock-fighting and bull-baiting in demand while they drank. Their diet consisted of dry bread, cheese, turnips, cabbage and potatoes. Meat was a once-a-week occurrence, and then it was only a scrap of mutton or pig’s ear. Little existed in the way of education. Here and there a village school master or a dame school would give them a smattering of reading and numbers for a few pence a week. Sometimes children were apprenticed out to learn a trade. The Charity School movement (a middle-class effort) tried to spread virtue by teaching poor children to read. It was hoped they would then read the Bible, the Catechism and other religious books. But more pagan literature crept in and literacy began to catch fire. The Industrial Revolution sharpened the wits and transformed the habits of the young who knew what the French Revolution in 1789 meant to them. By that time the lower classes were on the move, and they were not content to leave their political and social welfare in the hands of others. ■

18th Century Comedy

“Comedy deals with the follies of the lower part of mankind and should excite laughter.”

—Oliver Goldsmith, essay in *Westminster Magazine*, 1772.

Oliver Goldsmith and Sheridan felt a new kind of comedy had risen in 1770's England. They called it “sentimental comedy” because it focused on the virtues rather than the vices of middle-class society and attempted to engage the feelings of the audience rather than produce laughter. These comedies “employed characters who uttered lofty sentiments and whose sensibilities were delicately refined to appreciate goodness of heart and to be horrified at crassness of any sort.”² Goldsmith argued that because of the triviality of the subject, these comedies had no value as drama.

Though some would consider *The Rivals* a comedy of character in which “pleasure derives from individual effects and not from a sophisticated overall informing aesthetic design,”³ other writers find deeper meaning in the play. For example, John Loftis in *Sheridan and the Drama of Georgian England* finds the comedy of character lies in the burlesque of the tyranny of the older generation (Sir Anthony and Mrs. Malaprop) against the whims of the younger generation (Lydia and Jack). Sheridan's sympathy clearly lies with the elders, for he had no tolerance for financially imprudent marriages. In his portrait of Lydia's romantic fantasies and Faulkland's self-inflicted sufferings, he reminds us of the power of the uncontrolled imagination. They are targets in his critique on sentimental comedy, the intrusion into comedy of subjects appropriate to tragedy.



Jack Durant, in his book *Richard Brinsley Sheridan*, finds the playwright exposes the outrage of 18th century marriage customs where wealth and high birth count for everything. Sheridan also attacks the folly of dueling, dramatizing through the character of Sir Lucius O'Trigger the dehumanizing effects of the dueling code. Most importantly, he satirizes Lydia, Jack and Julia (who trumpets her own virtues) as offending the important code of common sense and moderation.

James Morwood in *Sheridan Studies* feels that Sheridan is writing of a “new age.”⁴ In the opening dialogue between the Coachman and Fag, we learn the enlightened have discarded their wigs and Bath, not London, is the center of fashion and intrigue.

Morwood finds the language of the play “strikingly realistic”⁵ and the new-fangled cursing a new kind of communication. In Act I scene ii, Lucy and Lydia are introduced, and Sheridan establishes the female protagonist as a woman of the moment who devours novels and frequents the library. While what she reads are romances of dubious value, at least she reads, a skill Sir Anthony feels is unnecessary for women. Sheridan is artfully lobbying for education for women, for “Mrs. Malaprop's charm school view is as empty a system as Lydia's education by novel.”⁶ Finally, Morwood feels the important rivalry in the play is not between the suitors, but between the foolishness of the old and the absurdities of the young. The result is miscommunication, malapropism and a clash of styles. ■

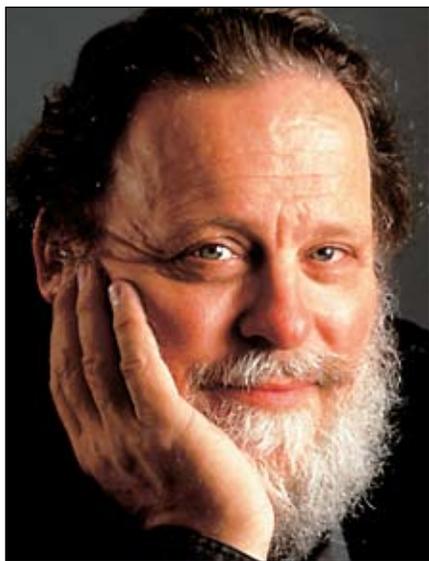
“When a thing is funny, search it for a hidden truth.”

—George Bernard Shaw.

PETER SCHICKELE

AKA PDQ BACH, AND COMPOSER FOR *RIVALS*

Peter Schickele was born in Ames, Iowa in 1935. He studied music at Swarthmore College where he received his BA in 1957 and composition with



Peter Schickele

Vincent Persichetti at the Julliard School of Music (MS 1960). He has held teaching positions in New York and in Aspen. In addition to producing a large number of works in a wide variety of genres and styles, he has composed film and television scores, made arrangements for Joan Baez and other popular singers, and contributed music and lyrics to the musical *Oh! Calcutta!*

He has received awards and commissions from the Ford

“Here lies a man with sundry flaws
And numerous sins upon his head;
We buried him today because
As far as we can tell, he’s dead.”

PDQ Bach’s epitaph.

Foundation, Smith College, the Philadelphia Art Alliance and St. Louis Symphony among others. He is best known for lecture concerts and recordings featuring his alter-ego “PDQ Bach” (1807-1742? the last and least of the sons of J. S. Bach). As P.D.Q. he has composed “Concerto for Horn and Hardart,” “Gross Concerto,” “Pervertimento,” “Serenude,” “The Stoned Guest” (a half-act opera) and “Hansel and Gretal and Ted and Alice” (an opera in one unnatural act). His serious compositions include “Serenade for Orchestra, 1959,” a choral mass and various vocal solos. ■

Notes

1. Sherwin, p.11.
2. McGuinness, p. xii.
3. Auburn, p. 36.
4. Morwood, p. 48.
5. Morwood, p. 50.
6. Morwood, p. 53.
7. Stanhope, p. 49.
8. Williams, p. 56.
9. Burton, p. 293.

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Activities

**Special Thanks to
Portland Center Stage
The Rivals
Family and Student Study Guide**

Discussion

1. Why has Jack Absolute created a new persona—Ensign Beverley—inventing, in effect, his own “rival?” Why is Lydia angry when Beverley’s true identity is revealed? What changes her mind?
2. What are Lydia’s opinions about romantic love? How has her interest in romance novels influenced her? What is your romantic ideal? What has influenced your romantic ideal? TV, movies, books, other? Have romantic ideals change much in the last two centuries? How?
3. Look up each character’s name. Which of the names tells you about his or her personality?
4. How has Lucy tricked those who trust her to help in their romantic entanglements? Why? If you played Lucy, how would you feel toward each character?
5. How does Fag help or hinder the progress of the action?
6. Why does Faulkland become disappointed with Julia? How does she respond?
7. Discuss the relationship between Jack and his father, Sir Anthony Absolute, and between Lydia and Mrs. Malaprop. Whose side are you on? Why? Whose side is the playwright on?
8. A lot of wordplay is used in *The Rivals*. What kind of word play does Mrs. Malaprop represent? What kind of word play is in Bob Acres’ oaths? Why is word play amusing?

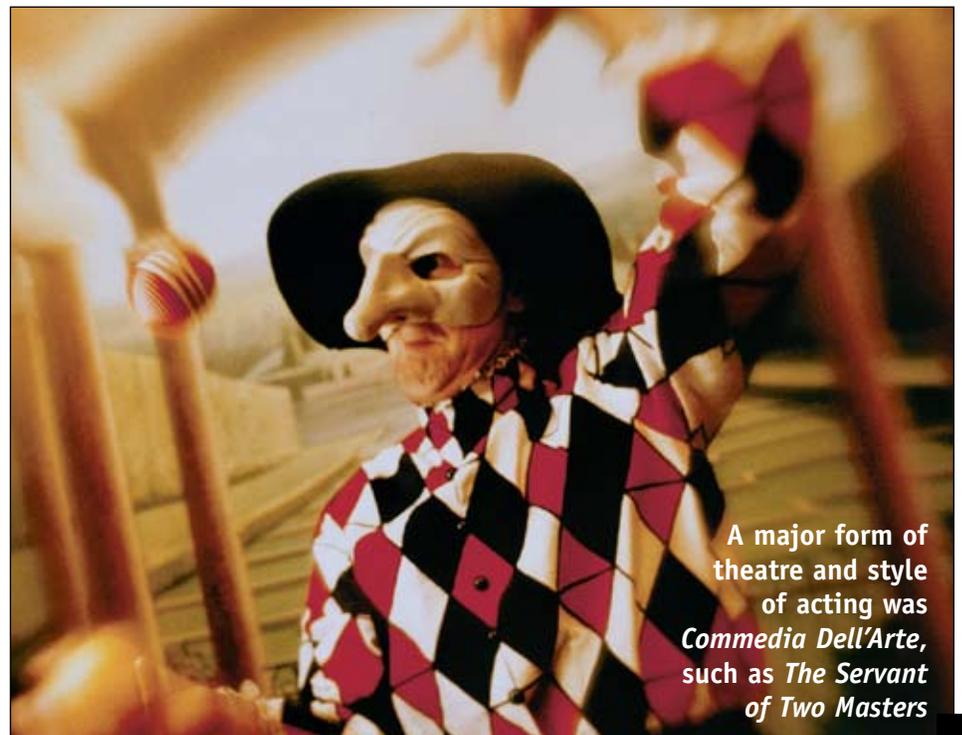
9. What kind of rivalries can be found in *The Rivals*? How are the rivalries resolved?
10. Define “honor.” How does Bob Acres define honor?
11. Parents vs children: How has the role of parents and children changed? Has it? Would a scene like the one between Captain Absolute and his father happen now? How about the one between Mrs. Malaprop and Lydia?

Exercises

1. Sheridan has named his characters well. The names reflect each character’s personality and temperament. ex. Lydia Languish. Look up the word languish. Write a scene and populate it with specially named characters. Have the speech and action reflect their names.
2. It was a unique actor form of the-

atre. From it developed what we called stock characters. A company might have seven or eight men and three or four women. Together they formed two sets of lovers, a servant girl, a captain, two zannis (comics) and two old men. Young actors and actresses usually played the straight romantic roles and there was usually a pompous old man and a lecherous old man. Try and fit the characters in *The Rivals* to the stock characters that existed in the *Commedia Dell’Arte*.

3. Bob Acres has a different manner of swearing: Acres: “I didn’t invent it myself though; but a commander in our militia—a great scholar, I assure you, says that there is no meaning in the common oaths, and that nothing but their antiquity makes them respectable; because, he says, the ancients would never stick to an oath or two, but would say, by Jove! or by Bacchus! or by Mars! or by Venus! or by Pallas!— According to the sentiment—so that to swear with propriety, says my little major, the oath should be an echo to the sense; and we call this the oath referential, or sentimental swearing ha! ha! ha! —’tis genteel, isn’t it?”



A major form of theatre and style of acting was *Commedia Dell’Arte*, such as *The Servant of Two Masters*

Bob's oaths:
 Odds flints, pans and triggers!
 Odds hilts and blades!
 Odds crowns and laurels!
 Odds sparks and flames!
 Odds blades!
 Odds life!
 Odds fire and fury!

The ancients swearing "By Jove," etc. refer to the Greek and Roman gods and what they were known for, Jove/Jupiter, most powerful all the ancient Roman gods, heaven and earth and of all gods and men; Dionysus/Bacchus, the god of wine, Mars/Ares, the god of war; Venus/Aphrodite, the goddess of love; Pallas Athena/Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, skills and warfare.

What are Bob Acres' oaths/swearing referring to? Can you invent some oaths referential?
 examples:
 By the bit and byte!
 By the pen!
 By the roller and blade!

4. If you were to populate this play with characters from television and movies who would play: Lydia Languish, Lucy, Mrs. Malaprop, Captain Absolute, Bob Acres, Fag, Sir Anthony Absolute, Julia, Sir Lucious O'Trigger, Faulkland? Justify your choice by explaining why.

5. Update the play:
 what does each of these characters drive;
 where do they shop;

what political party do they belong to;
 what is their style of dress;
 what clubs do they belong to;
 what kind of pet do they have;
 how do they support themselves;
 what is their favorite TV show or movie;
 who is their favorite author;
 what is their favorite color;
 what sport do they participate in;
 what is their favorite food;
 what is their biggest pet peeve?

Characteristics:
 One's are assertive and aggressive.
 Twos only back down to one's.
 Threes are somewhat withdrawn and uncomfortable around other people.
 Fours are shy and vulnerable.
 Begin: ' Three of the people live together; they need a roommate so they place an ad in the paper. The fourth actor is coming to interview for a room in the house. If the participants have selected their own status they should keep it to themselves and play it all the way through the scene. If more than one actor selects the same status then the scene is much more interesting and you learn more about status than if the participants each play a different status.

Games

1. Equal Status

Give students a situation where one is visiting the other in his or her home. For example, a boy is picking a girl up for a date. Her sister answers the door and informs the boy that her sister is not home yet. During the discussion the students are to try and maintain/balance their partner's status. ' One person should not appear to be of a higher (more powerful) status than the other. Use posture, eye contact, tone of voice, manner of speaking to maintain an equal status.

2. Pecking Order

Four people are needed. Each person is to select his or her own place in the pecking order secretly or each can be assigned. One is the highest, two is answerable to one but can tell three and four what to do, and so on down to four who is answerable to everyone and has to ask permission to say anything.

3. Out-status your partner

Students start with as low a status as possible. They could be on the floor in a fetal position or curled up. Each takes turns making a small movement that raises their status. Each raises his her own status just a little bit over what the other actor just did. Try to go from low to as high as possible.

An alternate exercise would be to purposely try to lower your status through movement. ■

Belt, Linda. *Acting Through Improv Through Theatre Sports*. Seattle, Washington:Thespi Productions, 1995.

Inside Out is intended for students and teachers but may be enjoyed by audiences of all ages.



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