

Stage Center Theatre

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Famous Female Playwrights Throughout History

"All women together ought to let flowers fall upon the grave of Aphra Behn...for it was she who earned them the right to speak their minds." -Virginia Woolf

Female dramatists helped pave the way for women to project a voice into the literary world. Here are some of the amazing women throughout history who worked to lay this foundation during a time dominated by male playwrights:

Aphra Behn

(1640-1689)

During the English Restoration Aphra Behn was the first woman to earn her living as a playwright. Her status was unusual in the male dominated world of playwriting. Behn's most famous works includes: *The Rover*, *The Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister*, and *Oroonoko*. Her works were the first to be described as "amatory fiction"—fiction written by a woman for a female audience. Behn acted as a rival to her male contemporaries and proved that women could be a competitive force in the world of playwriting.

Joanna Baillie

(1762-1851)

Scottish poet and dramatist Joanna Baillie worked as one of the first playwrights to produce psychological plays that focused heavily on observation of character rather than lavish spectacle. Baillie's best known plays are the

Plays on the Passions. This series, consisting of nine plays, was first criticized as "closet plays"—plays not meant for the stage. Baillie argued that her plays should be praised for their psychological detail. She wished to create intimate plays where facial expression could clearly be seen. While criticized during her time, Baillie's realistic presentation and observational style would come to dominate theatre in the coming century.

Lorraine Hansberry

(1930-1965)

Chicagoan Lorraine Hansberry was an African American playwright and author. Her first play, *A Raisin in the Sun*, also proved to be her most successful. The play was inspired by her family's legal battle against racially segregated housing laws on the south side of Chicago. The play went on to be the first ever produced on Broadway by an African American woman. *A Raisin in the Sun* is now an American classic that showcases the racial tensions underscoring modern society.

Final Performances

Selecting Memory Feb. 26, March 1, 2
(F 109)

Emma's Child March 3, 4, 5,
(Stage Center Theatre)

UPCOMING EVENTS

MAIN STAGE 7:30PM

Reservations: (773) 442-4274

Bleacher Bums

April 14-16, 21-23, 28-30

As You Like It

June 9-11, 16-18, 23-25

You Can't Take it With You

July 21-23, 28-30, August 4-6

CHILDREN'S THEATRE 10:30AM

Reservations: (773) 442-5971

The Love for Three Oranges

Monday, Wednesday, Friday,
March-April

Stage Center Theatre

A great time for family and friends of all ages, Stage Center Theatre also offers a great value on entertainment. Admission to all productions is **free for students, faculty, and staff with a valid NEIU ID.**

Main Stage

General Admission.....\$10

Seniors/Alumni/Students.....\$8

Children 6-12.....\$6

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CHILDREN'S THEATRE

The Love for Three Oranges

The Love for Three Oranges is a production based in an old Italian comedy style of theatre known as commedia dell'Arte. It is loosely based on the southern European tales of Count Carlo Gozzi, written in 1761. When adapting this story, Doreen B. Heard took care to include jokes and situations modern audiences would find humorous, but still be true to the original plot.

In this play, King Silvio is concerned for his son, Prince Tartaglia, who never smiles. When

the royal doctor, Il Dottore, cannot cure him, the court jester Truffaldino and the king's advisor Pantalone think the way to cheer the prince is to have a festival. The festival does not go according to plan, and Prince Tartaglia is cursed by a sorceress. He must then steal three magic oranges from the evil fairy Creonta while hilarious chaos ensues. *The Love for Three Oranges* can be seen Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays throughout March and April.

CAST:

Truffaldino: Keith Harkleroad

King Silvio: Julian Fishov

Dottore: Tim Geraty

Pantalone: Rand Riggberg

Princess Clarissa: Courtney Rodgers

Fata Morgana: Adrienne Brandyburg

Prince Tartaglia: Patryk Szwankowski

Creonta: Caitlin Inman

Princess Ninetta: April Strong

Zanni, Strolling Players, Grotesques:

Gio Dela Vega, April Strong, Monica Clark, Antwan Johnson, Tim Geraty, Caitlin Inman, Trisha Carlson, Natalie Ortiz, Yim Chiu, Ana Neric, Courtney Rodgers

Musician: Jenna Portenlanger

Commedia dell'Arte

Commedia dell'Arte took root in Italy at the beginning of the 14th century. Commedia troupes would tour throughout the country offering up entertainment in each town they passed. Performers improvised around a fixed plot with stock characters. Masks were worn by actors to aid quick character recognition.

These fixed plots usually dealt with love intrigue, clever tricks to gain money, or the outwitting of a simpleton. While the plot was fixed, the surrounding dialogue was pure improvisation. Plots worked as outlines for actors to follow, but it was up to the performers to provide the dialogue and jokes to round out the story. For this reason many Commedia actors relied heavily on physical comedy; comedy dependent on body movement and the use of props. Actors would fall and constantly stumble to earn a laugh from their audi-

ence. This physical comedy moved beyond the body and into props as well. For example, a slapstick was often used to slap and hit other characters in order increase the physicality involved in a comedic situation. The term "slapstick" is used today to describe any sort of physical comedy, a holdover from the times of Commedia.

To aid in their improvisation, Commedia troupes pulled from a set of stock characters when acting. These characters functioned as exaggerated portraits of people found in their contemporary Italian society. Eventually these characters became so well-developed they were given names to describe their persona. Audiences came to expect characters to exhibit certain behaviors. For example, the slapstick would always be carried by the clown, *Truffaldino*.

To help with character identification performers donned masks. These masks became the hallmark of Commedia, embodying the soul of the character. Almost all of the stock characters in Commedia are affiliated with a mask. Masks worked to aid in improvisation by providing performers with fully developed characters they could embody each night. Actors were able to spend less time on characterization and more on developing dialogue for the outlined skit.

Commedia characters became so recognizable that many sitcoms today feature developed Commedia characters within their plots. Slapstick comedy also functions as a holdover as many shows are dependent on physical comedy. Everyone from Charlie Chaplin to the Three Stooges work as reincarnations of Commedia.