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next in todd

10th annual one act play festival

April 30 - May 3 @ 8pm
May 3 @ 3pm

$3 (pay at the door)
the ur international theatre program

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program information written & compiled by Eugene Vaynberg

URITP photographer  
Richard Baker

URITP videographer  
Victor Kucherov

graphic, program & poster design  
i:master/studios at imaster.studios@gmail.com

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Program content is compiled by the production’s Assistant Director, Eugene Vaynberg, and edited by Nigel Maister. For a complete list of sources and works cited, please contact the Theatre Program. The program and its printing is supported in part by the UR English Department (“The Program Project”).

get with the program

This season is supported in part by the following generous patrons and friends of the UR International Theatre Program:

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senior farewell

The UR International Theatre Program fondly bids farewell to the following seniors who have been active in theatre over the course of their undergraduate years. We wish them good luck and godspeed in the years ahead:


www.rochester.edu/theatre
Kimberly Glennon (Costume Design) is resident costume designer for the Classical Theatre of Harlem (CTH). She received a 2003 Obie Award and an American Theatre Wing Design Award nomination for her costume design of CTH’s The Blacks: A Clown Show. She recently received a 2005 AudeCto Award for Melvin Van Peebles Ain’t Supposed To Die A Natural Death. Additional credits include: Sixteen Wounded (Cherry Lane); Growing Up A Slave (American Place); As You Like It (Juilliard); Tu Pity Shes A Whore and Accidental Death of an Anarchist (University of Rochester); Bulrush (Urban Stages); Creation (Gussy Charles Productions); The Magic Flute (Ohio Northern University); and touring productions of CTH’s Romeo and Juliet and Ain’t Supposed To Die A Natural Death. Most recently she designed the Creative Time/Paul Chan/CTH collaborative art project, Waiting for Godot in New Orleans. Her work can also be seen in two short films, one starring Danny Glover, running at the New York Historical Society’s NewYorkDivided exhibition.

Michael McQuilken (Sound Design & Original Music) has been writing scores for theatre and film for the past thirteen years. He is a long-time street performer, recording artist, builder of new instruments, and maker of original theater works. After his time at the UR, Michael will be performing his play A Day in Dig Nation (co-written with Tommy Smith) at the Prague Fringe Festival. He will begin graduate studies in directing at Yale this coming August. He lives in New York City.

Jonathan Ciccarelli (Movement Coach) was born and raised in Cambridge, MA. He received his BA from Bard College in 2005 and was the recipient of the Don Parker Prize in Dance Performance. Jonathan moved to NYC in 2005 and studied with the Professional Studies Program at the Limon Institute. He has danced for various artists and choreographers in addition to choreographing for the theatre. He has performed for Catlin Cobb in Spirit of Thirst and other works at the Bulldog Studios in Beacon, NY, and at the Dance Across Borders International Dance Festival. In 2006, he choreographed Serious Money (dir. Roger Benington) at Bard College. He performed for Elojes Dance Theater in a modern-ballet, based on the H.G. Wells novel, The Time Machine (chor. Jessica Jennings). Jonathan recently joined Abby Bender’s Schmantze Theatre, and will be performing in the premiere of Zeromun in May.
Alexander Ostrovsky

Considered one of the most important Russian playwrights of the nineteenth century, Alexander Ostrovsky revolutionized the Russian theater in the years prior to those of the great Russian writer, Anton Chekhov, and director, Constantin Stanislavsky. Ostrovsky was born April 12, 1823 in Moscow into the very merchant class he would come to portray so well. Although a quality education was reserved for the nobility and extremely wealthy, Ostrovsky benefited greatly from his grandfather's membership in the priesthood as well as his father's graduation from the Moscow Theological Academy. Furthermore, his stepmother's nobility allowed him to enter into a higher class, and had training for an education that included training in French, Greek, Latin, and music. Due to this level of schooling and the resources of his family, Ostrovsky developed a love of literature and an extraordinary ability to reflect his world.

While Ostrovsky's family was materially in the upper class, his father's law practice served the lower classes and was more profitable for the family to live in the same district of Moscow as these clients. The environment in which Ostrovsky grew up thus determined his friends and the type of people he would accustom himself to. His intimacy with the lower classes later allowed Ostrovsky to write about a niche that other great writers of his time were ignoring. Tolstoy, Turgenev, and Dostoevsky, for example, all wrote about the nobility, largely because they were nobles by birth.

Ostrovsky graduated from the First Moscow Gymnasium with honors, entered the Moscow State University without having to take entrance exams, and began to follow in his father's footsteps by studying law. Over the next few years, he spent an increasing amount of time in the theater, both working in it and watching performances. His consequent neglect of schoolwork led to a failure of his examinations in 1842, and after repeated further failures, he dropped out of university for good, seeking to pursue a literary career.

Unsatisfied with his son's plans, Ostrovsky's father found employment for him in the Court of Conscience, a small claims court established by Catherine the Great to settle minor disputes. Similar to many other Russian institutions of the day, however, the court was extremely corrupt and was unlikely to propel Ostrovsky forward in any career. Realizing this, his father had him transferred to the Moscow Commercial Court where Ostrovsky witnessed the squabbles, financial dealings, debts, broken contracts, and bribery that he would later go on to depict in his plays. It was while working at this court that Ostrovsky wrote his first successful play, The Bankrupt (later to become A Family Affair), which, upon being read at a professor's house, caught the young playwright to pronounce: "I counted myself a Russian writer and believed in my calling without doubt or hesitation." Ostrovsky was forced to submit the play to the censorship board prior to publication and eventually it found its way to Tsar Nicholas I, who forbade its publication and instigated an investigation by the police into Ostrovsky's life. This led to his dismissal from the Moscow Court and, after bringing home a wife from the lower classes, his father disowned him and cut off all financial assistance forcing Ostrovsky to move into a poor section of the city.

Benington developed his adaptation of Paul Monette's Sanctuary at the 1998 Sundance Theatre Laboratory. Original plays for children include The Dark Shadows, Icona & the Voice Within, The Secret in the Shoebox and Timocina & the Crocodiles (selected for The Drama League's New Directors/New Works). Grants include a Jim Henson Foundation grant, Arts Grants from the Salt Lake City Arts Council, Individual Artist Grants from the Utah Arts Council, and the NEA/TCG Career Development Program for Directors (2003-2005). Regional productions: Grave and Never Swim Alone (Washington Ensemble Theatre, Seattle), I Am My Own Wife (Madison Rep.), Serious Money (Bard College) and most recently Skin in Flames (Salt Lake Acting Company).

Daniel Evans (Set Design) is a theater artist/creative professional with over 20 years career experience in various disciplines. He has collaborated with Heidi Duckler's Collage Dance Theatre since 1994, designing and co-creating site-specific dance theater performances in non-traditional and historic venues in the LA area, including Sleeping with the Ambassador (the Ambassador Hotel), Cover Story (the Herald-Examiner Building), and Most Wanted (the Lincoln Heights Jail), for which he received a Lester Horton Dance Award. He recently designed the set for Marissa Chiba's Daughter of a Cuban Revolutionary (dir. Mira Kingsley) at REDCAT (LA) and at Daryl Roth/DR2 (NYC). He has an MFA in Scene Design from CalArts, where he designed the set and video for the premiere of Big Baby (dir. Claudia Zelinsky), sets for The Cantata for Agnieszka, and the English-language premiere of Tanya Tanya (both dir. Mira Kingsley).

He was a live video camera performer for David Rosenboom's Bell Solaris (dir. Travis Preston) and created, directed, and designed a puppetry-based performance adapted from his Mormon pioneer ancestor's journals, entitled Terrible Magic. Dan's work has been recognized by the Society for Environmental Graphic Design, The Lester Horton Dance Awards, Time Magazine and The James Beard Foundation.

Rebecca M. K. Maku (Lighting Design) has designed at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and Sibiu International Theatre Festival in Romania, and has worked extensively in NYC. She is Resident Lighting Designer for Proto-type, Inc., based in Lancaster, UK. Rebecca recently received her MFA from CalArts.
Satire is defined as a genre in which human or individual vices, follies, abuses, or shortcomings are held up to censure by means of ridicule, derision, burlesque, irony, or other methods, ideally with an intent to bring about improvement. Although satire is usually meant to be funny, the purpose of satire is not primarily humor in itself so much as an attack on something of which the author strongly disapproves, using the weapon of wit.

Earliest Satires

The Satire of the Trades dates to the beginning of the 2nd millennium in ancient Egypt, and is one of the oldest texts using hyperbole in order to achieve a didactic aim. It describes the various trades in an exaggeratedly disparaging fashion in order to convince students tired of studying that their job as scribes will be far superior to that of the ordinary man in the street.

Famous Satirists & Satirists

Aristophanes was a Greek dramatist, known as the “Father of Comedy” and the “Prince of Ancient Comedy”. His plays include The Acharnians, The Knights, The Wasps, Peace, The Birds, Lysistrata, Thesmophoriazuse, and The Frogs.

Desiderius Erasmus Rotterdam was a Dutch humanist and theologian. Erasmus’ best known work was The Praise of Folly, a satirical attack on the traditions of the Catholic Church and popular superstitions, written in 1509 and published in 1511.

Jonathan Swift was one of the greatest Anglo-Irish satirists, and one of the first to practice modern journalistic satire. Famous works include A Modest Proposal: For Preventing the Children of Poor People in Ireland from being a Burden to their Parents or Country, and for Making them Beneficial to the Publick, The Shortest Way with the Dissenters, and Gulliver’s Travels.

Mark Twain was a great American satirist. Famous works include Huckleberry Finn, The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County, and A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court.

Other Famous Satirists Include:

Edgar Allen Poe, Lewis Carroll, Oscar Wilde, Mikhail Bulgakov, H.L. Mencken, Aldous Huxley, Joseph Heller, George Orwell, Dario Fo, Kurt Vonnegut, Douglas Adams, David Sedaris, Chuck Palahniuk

Actor’s Circle, a privately funded theater intended to make plays more accessible to the masses by charging low ticket prices. The theater was also a launching pad for aspiring actors and directors. It allowed women to become members and was run entirely democratically. In 1886 Ostrovsky was appointed artistic director of the Moscow Imperial Theatre, but shortly thereafter he suffered from multiple heart attacks. He passed away on June 3 of that year.

Ostrovsky’s body of work is extensive. Notable plays include The Poor Bride, Poverty is No Crime, The Forest, The Snow Maiden, Wolves and Sheep, To Every Sage His Share of Folly, Without a Dowry, Without Guilt Guilty, and what many consider to be his masterpiece, The Thunderstorm. Many of his plays were originally censored and were forced to wait for changes of heart or a more liberal stance from the imperial government before they could be performed. A Family Affair, for example, was prohibited for ten years due to its views on the merchant class and its blatant portrayals of corruption, greed, and materialism in Russian society. Only on the accession to the throne of Alexander III was it produced.

Ostrovsky revolutionized Russian theater, both through playwriting and directing. The themes of his plays remain topical to this day, and his ability to portray life in a realistic way not only gives us insight into the bourgeois life of imperial Russia, but also into our own world of materialism and greed.
The reality television phenomenon has pervaded our daily lives to an extraordinary extent. Television networks have created multitudes of shows consisting of unrealistic combinations of people or situations with the simple stipulation that there be conflict and that the conflict be entertaining. How often does a man get to temporarily swap his wife for a different woman? How often do we find ourselves forced to compete for large sums of money on deserted islands devoid of civilization? How often does a man pretend to be a millionaire and subsequently engage in a contest where thirty eligible women compete to become his wife? Granted, these are some of the more extreme examples of shows sent to our television sets. One might claim that American Idol’s attempt at finding the best singers in America truly works to find the most talented among us. Similarly, Project Runway rewards those with actual talent for creating new fashion styles. However, regardless of the “legitimacy” of any reality television programs, they are in actuality a manifestation of our obsession with status, fame, and wealth—in short, our greed.

Within the context of A Family Affair, greed is an overarching theme. It motivates each and every character. In the lives of the imperial merchant class represented by Ostrovsky, greed is directly reflected in a grasping desire for material goods and an all-consuming effort to accumulate unbridled wealth. This greed has a singular intention: to validate and place a value on life on a scale defined by rarity, price and level of luxury.

Our contemporary culture has transformed our notion of class. For Ostrovsky, class structure was almost entirely dependent on heredity. While it may have been possible for one type of merchant to wriggle his way into a more elite commercial class, a peasant farmer would remain on his land, subject to his lord, for the rest of his life. The 20th century American ideal of opportunity and material success being open to all citizens irrespective of birth was up. Once the length of the contract was paid, and attained freedom they were bound to masters by simply bondsmen by birth. Contract bondsmen can be likened to indentured servants. They were bound to masters by contract, worked without getting paid, and attained freedom once the length of the contract was up.

We can use Project Runway as an example. We, as a society, have created the desire for expensive, fashionable, and edgy clothing. Most of us cannot afford the type of designer clothing represented on the show, and even more of us cannot make a living creating such clothing. However, we have placed an importance on fashion and have decided that there is a demand for designers and expensive clothing. Even though we are unlikely to directly partake in this world, we consume the images and ideas of the reality show and it becomes a representation of our own latent desire for accumulation was amplified by this democratization of possibility, simply because those who were previously relegated to the lower classes suddenly developed an ambition to rise above destitution. Class defined by material success based on ownership inevitably leads to the heightened consumer impulse prevalent in our contemporary society and our obsession with the publicly “private” lives of those who have attained this success.

While the comparison between imperial Russia and modern western culture can be made in this way, we can also see a correlation between our modern greed and the celebrity culture and reality television that dominate our society. Our society lives vicariously through those who represent the wealth and status we individually desire. We greedily consume images of stars and celebrities, irrespective of their talent, by virtue of the sheer fact of their notoriety.

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alcoholism

- Official number of alcoholics in Russia: 7 million*
- Population of Russia: 145 million
- % Alcoholics: 4.8%
- Official number of alcoholics in the United States: 16 million
- Population of United States: 300 million
- % Alcoholics: 5.3%

*Most experts believe that official Russian statistics for alcoholism are grossly underestimated.

russia

- Each Russian drinks 27 liters (7.13 gallons) of alcohol per year.
- The World Health Organization estimates that a nation is likely to die out if its citizens drink an average of 8 liters of alcohol per year.
- Annual consumption of vodka in Russia: 4 billion liters.
- The total number of alcohol-related deaths for 1994 was 751,000 people, or 33% of all deaths.
- Between 1960 and 1987, 30 million to 35 million people died of alcohol abuse.
- In the 1980s, 74% of murders were committed under the influence.
- Worker production on paydays and following weekends drops as much as 30%.
- It is widely believed that Prince Vladimir of Kiev chose Christianity over Islam in the year 987 simply to avoid the Muslim prohibition on alcohol.

united states

- The costs of alcohol abuse and alcoholism were estimated to be $184.6 billion in 1998.
- According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, during 2002, alcohol-related motor-vehicle crashes resulted in 17,419 deaths in the United States, accounting for 41% of all traffic fatalities.
- A study found that a consumption increase of 1 liter of alcohol per capita brings about an increase in the divorce rate of about 20%.
- Alcohol is the 3rd largest non-disease related cause of death, following tobacco and poor diets/physical inactivity.

living on credit

The median U.S. household income is currently $43,200 and the typical family's credit card balance is now almost 5% of their annual income.

8.3% of households owe $9,000 or more on their cards.

51% of the US population has at least two credit cards.

It is estimated that, on average, 20% of Americans have "maxed out" their credit cards.

Americans' average credit card debt is $8,400 per household.

Roughly 24% of personal expenditures in the United States are made using bank credit cards, retail cards, and debit cards.

Approximately 185 million American consumers have at least one credit card.

Americans pay, on average, an 18.9% interest rate on credit cards. The average household pays $83.33 in credit card interest per month.

On average, the typical credit card purchase is 112% higher than if using cash.

More than 40% of American families spend more than they earn.

As of 1995, 92% of American family disposable income is spent on paying debts, up from 65% in 1975.
In most cases—certainly in Western society—love marriages have trumped past traditional beliefs regarding spousal relationships. In certain cultures, matchmakers were devoted to the process. Typically, matchmakers were elderly women who were expected to apply their own marital experience to the understanding of the psychology of a young and unmarried girl. In addition, a matchmaker’s age posed no threat to a single girl. Young girls were considered unfit for matchmaking because of the danger that they might be compromised. A matchmaker knew every young man and girl in her community. She knew their dates of birth, their temperaments and family income, their hobbies and their appearances. It was the common practice that a matchmaker visit households who had children fit for marriage and recommend them to each other. ‘The Chinese feudal society, for example, employed matchmakers who were actually financially involved in all arrangements. Like a real estate agent or a broker, she depended upon her relationships and persuasive skills for a living. Orthodox Jews still maintain the tradition of matchmaking, called “Shidduch,” and dating is limited to the search for a marriage partner organized by a “Shadchan” (“matchmaker” in Yiddish). Such modern examples of traditional matchmaking are common only in highly conservative cultures, such as Orthodox Judaism.

In most cases—certainly in Western society—love marriages have trumped past traditional beliefs regarding wellfounded. As our class system has shifted from hereditary origins to being based on individual financial wealth, maintaining combinations of certain types of families is no longer necessary. Without an imperial system for class structure, one no longer needs to be born into the nobility in order to become a respected individual. Nonetheless, the idea of matchmaking has evolved as well, and is maintained even in today’s world. Prior to the Internet revolution, dating services were available for those struggling to find partners. These days, those either too busy or simply unable to find meaningful relationships in the usual ways have begun frequenting online dating websites. During a single week in January of 2005, the Nielsen/NetRatings NetView reported that there were almost nineteen million visitors to the top ten dating websites.

With the advent of civilization, the institution of marriage became critical in order to facilitate the security of certain social constructs. Marriage created a system of rules that would govern the granting of property rights, heredity, and the protection of bloodlines, things that, in effect, perpetuated the prevailing class system (while also serving to create a secure environment for the perpetuation of the human race). As marriage was an institution under the legislation of the government or local religious body, rules varied in order to support a particular political or religious system. While the idea of marriage has evolved today to become based on our notion of romantic love and partnership, the original foundation was almost solely economic.

In order to facilitate proper matching of people appropriate to their class, marriages were usually arranged. In general, the family itself undertook these arrangements. In certain cultures, matchmakers were devoted to the process. Typically, matchmakers were elderly women who were expected to apply their own marital experience to the understanding of the psychology of a young and unmarried girl. In addition, a matchmaker’s age posed no threat to a single girl. Young girls were considered unfit for matchmaking because of the danger that they might be compromised. A matchmaker knew every young man and girl in her community. She knew their dates of birth, their temperaments and family income, their hobbies and their appearances. It was the common practice that a matchmaker visit households who had children fit for marriage and recommend them to each other. ‘The Chinese feudal society, for example, employed matchmakers who were actually financially involved in all arrangements. Like a real estate agent or a broker, she depended upon her relationships and persuasive skills for a living. Orthodox Jews still maintain the tradition of matchmaking, called “Shidduch,” and dating is limited to the search for a marriage partner organized by a “Shadchan” (“matchmaker” in Yiddish). Such modern examples of traditional matchmaking are common only in highly conservative cultures, such as Orthodox Judaism.

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Three years later, these numbers have grown tremendously as online dating becomes more and more mainstream. Online Dating Magazine estimates that twenty million people visit at least one online dating service per month. Each year, 120,000 marriages occur as a result of online dating. Not only do people visit these sites, but they pay legitimate sums of money in order to find a mate. During the first half of 2003, consumers spent $214 million on online dating sites, an increase of 76% over the previous year. The average user of an online dating site spends $240 per year while trying to find a match. While the old woman who used to arrange marriages has disappeared, the online dating website has replaced her.

While modern western societies may find the idea of an arranged marriage archaic and missing the important qualities of any relationship, older societies found much comfort in the tradition. The high rate of divorce certainly suggests that when left up to their own devices, individuals are not particularly good at choosing lifelong mates. Since matchmakers are intimately familiar with the characteristics, interests, and personalities of those they set up, the chances of incompatibilities may be diminished. The future husband and wife have not had the opportunity to present themselves in the way each personally desires, and a matchmaker will be honest with her assessment of each person. Likewise, the lack of a prior meeting reduces the expectations that the newlyweds will have. Low expectations often result in the situation turning out better than previously considered, and relationships may blossom. Finally, many proponents of arranged marriages point to the 0% to 7% divorce rate for arranged marriages in contrast with a 55% divorce rate for the United States. While none of this is to say that traditional arranged marriages are preferable to our current system, it is interesting that we have not fared better in creating long-lasting spousal relationships.

The inability to enter into meaningful, life-long marriages has resulted in the increased use of online dating services. As we have evolved to determine the most important characteristics of family and interpersonal relations, the idea of matchmaking has evolved with us. We cannot claim that we do not access some form of arrangement when an ever-increasing number of us rely on matchmaking services in order to show us the available singles out there. We may no longer have someone telling us exactly whom we are supposed to marry, but we rely on a computer program to tell us whom we may be most compatible with. While we certainly feel more freedom due to the fact that our families will not subject us to an undesirable lifestyle or companion, our mode of selection is still often dependent on a third party. The idea that a stranger may have a superior sense about the compatibility of two people, better than they themselves, has maintained itself throughout all the transformations marriage has undertaken over the years.