

The Winter Production 2012



can

virtue

trump

vice?

the
RELAPSE

by John Vanbrugh

4 5 6 December @ 7.30pm



Cast

Foppington	<i>VINCENT ZULAWSKI</i>
Fashion	<i>BETH MASKALL</i>
Loveless	<i>ROB MILLER</i>
Worthy	<i>RUFUS ROCK</i>
Clumsey	<i>ROLY BOTHA</i>
Coupler	<i>EDDIE OLIVER</i>
Bull	<i>RUAN EVANS</i>
Syringe	<i>LUCY ATTWOOL-JONES</i>
Lory	<i>JAMES FORSYTH</i>
Amanda	<i>EVIE CULLINGWORTH</i>
Berinthia	<i>OLIVIA BRETT</i>
Hoyden	<i>CARMEN CASAL-LOPEZ</i>
Nurse	<i>CELESTE MACILWAIN</i>
Calico	<i>PIPER ANDERSON-KLOTZ</i>
La Vérole	<i>MARTHA HARLAN</i>
Ensemble	<i>HEBE BARLETT, PER CARMINGER, ALEX HOUGHTON, PIERS PEEL</i>

Production

Lighting Operator	<i>GEORGE VEYS</i>
Sound Operator	<i>JACK PAXMAN</i>
Deputy Stage Manager	<i>MOLLY ROGERSON</i>
Assistant Stage Managers	<i>JENNA SAJOUS & CHRIS BURY</i>
Wardrobe	<i>LESLEY DAKIN</i>
Wardrobe/Make up	<i>TASH BLACKLEY</i>
Set Construction	<i>GARETH TULLETT</i>
Scenic Art	<i>BEDALES STAGE CREW</i>
Production Design	<i>JOANNE GREENWOOD</i>
Director	<i>PHIL KING</i>

“The Relapse” cover photography *ALEX HORGAN*

In a world of

style over **substance**

the
RELAPSE

by John Vanbrugh

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*“The great strength of *The Relapse* lies in the play’s sheer vivacity, whether in language or action.”*

From well-heeled London town, its fashions and its concern with pleasure, to gruff country folk with their daughters and dowries, the audience dives through a whirlwind of intrigue.

In a new production of this restoration comedy the politics of love and sex, the constant negotiations, the deals, are shown to be as gripping now as they were to audiences over 300 years ago. Lords chase ladies. Love plays lust. Restraint fights riotousness.

the RELAPSE

“In 1642, with the first Civil War, the Puritans had closed the theatres as ‘immoral hotbeds of vice, corruption, licentiousness, and the plague.’

From 1649 to 1660 England was a republic with Oliver Cromwell as head of State, 1653-1658. In 1660, with the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II, the theatres were re-opened and patents to run them had been granted to Davenant (The King’s company) at Drury lane and Killigrew (The Duke’s company) at Lincoln’s Inn...

Theatre in the late 1600s, like our own West End, was an expensive place to go for an evening’s entertainment. The cheapest seat was a shilling (about a servant’s weekly wage). For two and sixpence you could sit in a box or on a bench directly in front of the stage. For one pound you could buy an entire box ... the atmosphere was much rowdier than it is today, with Fops and Beaux often buying seats ON the stage, so that they parade the latest fashions and show off to the audience. They would also enter into debate with the actors, which could lead to violent exchanges. There are several recorded cases of duels being fought the morning after performances at which the honour of certain men and women had been called into question.” (From the National Theatre Education Workpack on *The Relapse*)

With the threat of debate and duels hanging over our heads then we are therefore indebted to Graham Banks in English for clearing up one hot topic for debate and confirming that “The Relapse” (the noun) may either be pronounced ree-lapse or r(e)lapse, based on choice. The verb is always the latter but the confusion around the former is now clear – the choice is yours.



Sir John Vanbrugh
by Sir Godfrey Kneller, Bt oil on
canvas, circa 1704-1710

Choice, and in particular sexual choice, is foregrounded in this play where everyone is out for what they can get and for most people that is someone else’s wife or husband. Amanda, Vanbrugh’s protagonist, fights against this and what she wants is to do the right thing – to honour her wedding vows and love her husband, and husband alone. Our production highlights Amanda as a woman ahead of her time and much more in keeping with our own. Modern dress catapults the play into the present and a long and brutal cut of the original script has seen a third of the play hit the cutting room floor. Vanbrugh, a multi-talented “renaissance” man, hopefully would have approved of the wish to keep the play pacy and relevant.

“John Vanbrugh was an architect, actor, soldier and –according to the French- a spy. It was in fact, during his stint in the Bastille that he wrote his first comedy, the *Provok’d Wife*. Four years later in 1696 Colley Cibber’s

Love’s Last Shift inspired Vanbrugh to write again, this was how *The Relapse* was born, a sequel to Cibber’s work where the popular Sir Novelty was promoted to Lord Foppington “the best fop ever to be brought upon the stage”, originally played by Cibber himself. Working on this play has been an eye opening experience, comedy that is still funny hundreds of years later despite huge changes in society, is always going to be a fun project to work on. *The Relapse* certainly did not disappoint.”

Beth Maskall, 6.2 student

So what of this genre of Restoration Comedy? And why stage one? As Styan highlights in his guide to *Restoration Comedy in Performance* “There were more than 400 plays written between 1660 and 1700, and some 180 playwrights write them. Quite a prolific period of theatre. So why did their audience enjoy plays of a kind which suffered so mixed a reception in the long years that followed? The repeated quip that no audience bright enough to understand a Restoration plot could possibly be dull enough to like it calls for an answer... its text is to be regarded as a framework and not a formula for performance. Restoration comedy was a kind of improvised charade, and, in John Crowne’s words in the preface to his masque *Calisto*, the

libretto was the 'cold lean carcass of the entertainment'." These texts, like so many for the stage are ripe for re-imagining by directors and casts. Our stripped-down and contemporary version takes inspiration from the phenomenal work of companies such as Cheek by Jowl who play texts like John Ford's '*Tis a Pity she's a Whore* (image below) with an intense and vibrant focus enabled by Donnellan's specific process.



Donnellan's Stanislavskian-driven process, a process aimed at emotional character truth, is one we've taken up in rehearsals of our comedy. Although the plays under discussion are different genres, aiming for character truth helps to ground the scene and helps actors move to a point of knowledge about their characters. This obviously takes time, and of course more time than we can ever hope for in a school environment with so many wonderful things available to our students, but we can aim for this exactness of approach. Without good process we can surely never expect good product.

Within this exactness of approach, there is also room to play. When Alex Jennings played Lord Foppington at the National theatre he was asked about what interested him about the part:

"The potential for something quite extreme and flamboyant, and the opportunity to really engage with the audience, which seemed like it would be fun to do, and scary as well... to actually confront the audience eyeball to eyeball, which is something I'm not often asked to do."

It was Brian Blessed who played the role of Sir Tunbelly Clumsey to Jennings' Foppington. This characteristic Blessed role, large, shouty and fun is played in this production by the equally large (thanks to our wonderful wardrobe team), shouty and fun Roly Botha who has found it hard to separate role and reality:

"Welcome to **my** show. The next hour or so of your miserable life will be well spent marvelling at the excellence of my taste in furniture and superior intelligence. If by chance you are unaware of my existence (how this happened I will never know, not I), I am Sir Clumsey Tunbelly – Justice of the Peace, Knight of His Majesty King Charles II, and father to the most divine example of human beauty ever to have graced the Earth: my lovely girl, Hoyden.

Presently, she has been promised the hand of Baron Novelty Fashion, Lord of Foppington. What I shall make of him, I know not, but believe you me if he does *anything* to upset my delicate flower the good Lord only knows what I'll do to him. I'll beat his teeth so far down his neck, he'll have to sit on his dinner to eat it!

Anyway, enjoy **my** show and remember;

I'M IN CHARGE!"

Thank you very much for coming, for supporting us and spending your evening in the company of Vanbrugh's play. There are countless people to thank in the making of the production. For the late nights and the worries we have parents and house staff to be grateful to, for without their support this would have been a far more difficult affair. The lighting, the wardrobe, the prop procurement, the deputy stage-managing and for all the other things we so often take for granted we thank you sincerely.

Phil King
Director





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