Astraea, she had a brief career as a spy for the state, but her make a name for herself in several lines. Under the alias allegories. The protagonist of de la Rivière Manley, even wrote scandalous political women took up the pen in great numbers. Some, like Mary ―Whore is scarce a more reproachful name than Poetess,‖ Similarly, even though Lord Rochester is quoted as saying, hedged round them raised them above the common ruck. Admittedly, the public exposure of their bodies and hence actresses, rather than boy actors, to play female roles. The theatres in 1660 had occasioned the employment of eminence of women. The recampaign; it was the English patricians, not the proles, protesting ―Make Love, Not War‖ about the Dutch first glance, the comparison seems superficial: no one was that ravaged the sexually active, turning the young and thousands over the course of a year and the Great Fire which extirpated it by wreaking its own havoc on hundreds of buildings have retained their lurid place in the common memory bank. What, however, of the rampant syphilis that ravaged the sexually active, turning the young and vigorous into crumbling dotards overnight? Who thinks of the financially crippling wars with the Dutch over commercial interests, which, incurring payments for naval vessels and spies, came close to bankrupting the kingdom? What of the fierce factional battles between Protestants, including the recently defeated Puritans, and Catholics, who had strong allies in the King and his Portuguese consort? An important aspect of the Restoration which needs to be reinforced amidst these images is the preeminence of women. The re-opening of the London theatres in 1660 had occasioned the employment of ―actresses,‖ rather than boy actors, to play female roles. Admittedly, the public exposure of their bodies and hence their ostensible availability ranked them socially as little better than prostitutes; but the glamour and celebrity that hedged round them raised them above the common ruck. Similarly, even though Lord Rochester is quoted as saying, ―Whore is scarce a more reproachful name than Poetess,‖ women took up the pen in great numbers. Some, like Mary de la Rivière Manley, even wrote scandalous political allegories. The protagonist of OR, Aphra Behn, set out to make a name for herself in several lines. Under the alias Astraea, she had a brief career as a spy for the state, but her missions were not successful. Moreover, hungry for fame, she could hardly become famous in a profession that required secrecy. As a writer, she practiced several genres, particularly the romance and the play. Playwriting at this time was chiefly a man’s game (game rather than profession, since playwrights were either noblemen or poets, and, before Dryden, author’s names did not appear on the playbill.). To get a play staged required social connections and patronage; to get it approved by the supercilious audience of wits and fops required diplomacy and address. Aphra Behn needed a good quantum of brains and guts to enter that arena.

Over the last few decades, contemporary dramatists have been drawn to explore “Good King Charles’s Golden Days.” Edward Bond composed a savage indictment of class privilege in Restoration (1981), which was revived with songs in 2006. The Earl of Rochester’s career was set forth in The Libertine by Stephen Jeffreys (1994), while the transition from boy actor to actress was treated in Compleat Female Stage Beauty by Jeffrey Hatcher (1999). Liz Duffy Adams’s OR, (2009), not only attempts a pastiche of Restoration comic devices and dialogue, but adds her own quantum of sexual politics. She sees the period as analogous to another era that has been distorted by crude stereotypes, the 1960s. At first glance, the comparison seems superficial: no one was protesting “Make Love, Not War” about the Dutch campaign; it was the English patricians, not the proles, who were shocking the church-going middle-class; and the most fashionable drug in Charles’s London was coffee. Nor do the airs of Purcell and Arne have anything in common with rock-‗n’-roll. Behn was no Erica Jong, let alone Janis Joplin; her romance about the vicissitudes of an enslaved African prince Oroonoko did more for anti-slavery sentiments than any of her plays did to enfranchise her sex. It is her example, rather than her works, that stands as a model for women’s liberation. What Adams has accomplished is to take the outward mannerisms of seventeenth-century comedy, add to them some of the gender disguises and bedroom antics of nineteenth-century farce, and offer an entertaining portrait of a pioneer too often forgotten among the periwigs and powder-puffs of ersatz Restorations.

Irina Yakubovskaya, Graduate Dramaturg
OR, by Liz Duffy Adams
Directed by Sheriden Thomas
April 8-12, 2014 at 8:00 pm

SPEAKING OF THE PLAY

In Virginia Woolf’s, *A Room of One’s Own*, the literary lioness brings Aphra to the fore,

“...And now we turn a very important corner — we come to Mrs. Behn; a woman forced to earn her living by her wits. She made, by working very hard, enough to live on. The importance of that fact outweighs anything that she actually wrote. Aphra Behn proved that money could be made by writing, and so writing became of practical importance. The extreme activity of mind, later in the 18th century among women, was founded on the solid fact that women could make money by writing. And money dignifies what is frivolous if unpaid for.

“All women together ought to let flowers fall upon the tomb of Aphra Behn which is, scandalously but appropriately, in Westminster Abby, for it was she who earned them the right to speak their minds. For now that Aphra Behn had done it, girls could say, ‘You need not give me an allowance; I can make money by my pen.’ Of course the answer for many years to come was, ‘Yes, by living the life of Aphra Behn! Death would be better!’”

Do enjoy this evening’s ride!

Sheriden Thomas

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**Department of Drama and Dance**

Natalya Baldyga — Theater History, Dramatic Literature and Criticism  
Joanne Bertelsen Barnett — Theater Manager; Executive Director, Tufts Children’s Theater Programs  
Kendra Bell — Costume Shop Supervisor  
Jennifer Burton — Film Studies  
Renata Celichowska — Director of Dance  
Downing Cless — Directing, Dramatic Literature and Theory  
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Eric Sauter — Assistant Technical Director  
Laurence Senelick — Dramatic Literature and Theory, Theater and Film History, Directing, Prologue Editor  
Ted Simpson — Head of Design  
Daniel Swain — Dance  
Sheriden Thomas — Acting  
Jo Williams — Production Manager

**Graduate Assistants**

Ibby Cizmar, Matthew DiCintio, Beck Holden, Patrick King, Matthew McMahen, Amy Meyer, Reza Mirsajadi, Danielle Rosvally, Hesamedin Sharifian, Max Shulman, Katherine Swimm, Irina Yakubovskaya

*OR* is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York
The Poetess too, they say, has Spies abroad,
Which have dispers’d themselves in every road,
I’th ’Upper Box, Pit, Galleries; every Face
You find disguis’d in a Black Velvet Case.
Prologue to The Forc’d Marriage
by Aphra Behn

The play OR, was written in 2009. Lizzy Duffy Adams took stylistic and linguistic liberties, and created a text, parts of which followed the conventions of seventeenth-century British playwriting. The characters of OR, tackle verse, both rhymed and blank, with as much virtuosity as the characters in Apha Behn’s plays. Their behavior conforms to the rules (or rather liberties) of the Restoration aristocracy, with a hint of bohemianism. Secondary characters appear on stage in disguise, introducing traditional commedia dell’arte devices that were immensely popular in Europe of the time. Aphra is the only character who does not fear to reveal her true identity. Uncompromising sincerity and self-awareness is what makes her unique in the eyes of the King, Nell and even her former lover and colleague-turned-enemy William Scott.

In life, according to the historical record, Aphra Behn’s popularity as a playwright was never great. In Restoration England, Behn was eclipsed by male writers, compelling her to disguise her bold ideas in subtext and veiled irony. Her opinions and concerns about playwriting and theatre practice, skillfully concealed in wit, can be found in the prologues and epilogues to her plays, as well as in dedications, letters and poetry. Perhaps she applied her skills as a spy to cover the tracks in her writing.

Due to the scarcity of records of her career and personal history over a number of years, her life has been mystified, open to romantic speculation. However, after Virginia Woolf’s famous essay in A Room of One’s Own (1929), Aphra Behn’s name was brought back to the literary memory, claiming and reinforcing the proto-feminist content of her texts. The preface to one of her plays The Lucky Chance actually ends with a tirade regarding women’s agency in playwriting:

All I ask, is the Privilege for my Masculine Part the Poet in me, (if any such you will allow me) to tread in those successful Paths my Predecessors have so long thriv’d in, to take those Measures that both the Ancient and Modern Writers have set me, and by which they have pleas’d the World so well. If I must not, because of my Sex, have this Freedom, but that you will usurp all to your selves.

Behn was eager to gain respect for her work, and as a playwright she felt constantly threatened by humiliating opinions caused solely by her gender. Throughout her life, Aphra Behn was trying to convince those on whose power she depended, whether the government or theatre audiences, that her voice deserved to be heard. Whichever dramatic form she chose, judging it to be her most valid means of expression, the more harshly she was criticized. So she needed to look for textual ‘masks’ to veil her true dramatic identity. One may argue that Behn performed a cross-dressing of literary identities in real life, just as actors and actresses practiced cross-dressing and gender inversion in theatrical performances at the time. In aristocratic society, with its mingling of artists and prostitutes, masks provided several benefits. A mask enabled anonymity, which consequently allowed behavior completely inimical to an individual’s ordinary status and role in society. Masks therefore opened up opportunities for interactions otherwise prohibited. Looking at the text of OR, one can notice how masked characters bring bold subtext to the surface. The act of unmasking leaves them utterly exposed, not physically but rather mentally and emotionally stripped bare.

In Restoration theatres, female to male cross-dressing ironically reinforced female sexuality. Breeches parts were now exploited specifically for the purpose of showing women’s legs, since traditional female attire did not provide a display of any lower body parts. In OR, Nell Gwyn the actress points to this fact (as well as to her legs of which she is proud). Aphra’s character problematizes the single-minded perception of female sexual orientation, taking what is called in the prologue “a made-up symmetry of sense” to a different level of personal freedom. For her, there is no need to choose between attraction to one gender or another: she truly believes in the most natural capacity for a human being to embrace both kinds of love. Indeed, Aphra Behn’s witty, clever, yet poetic logic leads to a conclusion that sounds much like the Beatles song “All you need is love”: “If together we can increase the sum total of happiness in the world for even an hour, I consider that an act of virtue, not vice.”

As a woman, Aphra Behn was certainly aware of the limitations to voicing her most sincere and radical thoughts without being ridiculed by a male-dominated society. She did, however, succeed in expressing her enlightened intentions of moral education by incorporating them, veiled, farcical or in disguise, in her playwriting. She was not allowed to speak out like a man and she wanted to be heard as a true woman. Her witty writing contains an inspiring message about artistic freedom; it is all the more powerful for being concealed.

Irina Yakubovskaya, Graduate Dramaturg
MAJOR PRODUCTIONS

Welcome to Arroyo’s
by Kristoffer Diaz
directed by Noe Montez
October 17-19 & 24-26, 2013

Rent
book, music & lyrics by Jonathan Larson
musical arrangements by Steve Skinner
original concept/additional lyrics by Billy Aronson
musical supervision & additional arrangements by Tim Weil
dramaturg Lynn Thomson
directed by Barbara Wallace Grossman
February 13-15 & 20-22, 2014

OR,
by Liz Duffy Adams
directed by Sheriden Thomas
April 8-12, 2014

TORN TICKET II
Title of Show
music by Jeff Bowen, book by Hunter Bell
directed Reza Mirsajadi
September 1-2, 2013

Secret Garden
music by Lucy Simon, book by Marsha Norman
directed by Michael Roubey
November 21-23, 2013

COLLINS PLAYERS
Roald Dahl’s Willy Wonka Junior
words & music by Leslie Bricusse & Anthony Newley
adapted for the stage by Leslie Bricusse & Timothy A. McDonald
based on the book Charlie and the Chocolate Factory
by Roald Dahl
directed by Luke Jorgensen
March 21-22, 2014

SPECIAL EVENTS

Over the Rainbow
Benefit for Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS
directed by Hope Schaitkin
December 3, 2013

Play by Play
sponsored by Bare Bodkin
December 6, 2013

De Nuestros Ojos
created and performed by Yessenia Rivas
April 17, 2014

Morning After
written and directed by Kelly O’Hara
April 23, 2014

MAGIC CIRCLE THEATER

Cinderella
by Kristin Baker
directed by Betsy Goldman
July 23-24 & August 1, 2013

Shrek the Musical
based on the DreamWorks Animation Motion Picture and the book by William Steig
book & lyrics by David Lindsay-Abaire
music by Jeanine Tesori
originally produced on Broadway by DreamWorks Theatricals and Neal Street Productions
directed by Luke Jorgensen
July 25 & August 6, 2013

The Musical Adventures of Flat Stanley-Junior
book by Timothy A. McDonald, Jonathan K. Waller
music by David Weinstein, Jonathan K. Waller, Timothy A. McDonald, and Stephen Gabriel
based on the book Flat Stanley by Jeff Brown
directed by Kyla Moulton
July 30–31 & August 8, 2013

PEN, PAINT & PRETZELS

All in the Timing
by David Ives
directed by Tori Otten
September 1-2, 2013

Lend me a Tenor
by Ken Ludwig
directed by Alex Kaufman
November 5, 2013

Eurydice
by Sarah Ruhl
directed by Cole von Glahn
November 14-16, 2013

A Night in the Theater
by Lawrence Casler
directed by Max Greenhouse
November 25, 2013

Katabasis
by Kellyn Henthorn
directed by Tori Otten
February 25, 2014

The 39 Steps
by Patrick Barlow
directed by Natalie Girshman
February 27, 2014

How I Learned to Drive
by Paula Vogel
directed by Hannah Deegan
March 6-8, 2014

AT THE TUFTS BALCH ARENA THEATER—A Summary of the 2013-2014 Season

JOIN US FOR OUR OPENING NIGHT CELEBRATION ON TUESDAY, APRIL 8, 2014

ALL TICKETS ARE ONLY $7.00. AFTER THE PERFORMANCE, THERE WILL BE A WINE AND CHEESE RECEPTION FOR AUDIENCE AND PRODUCTION MEMBERS.

FOR OR:
Performances on Tuesday-Saturday are at 8:00 pm. Ticket prices: $12.00 for all performances; $7.00 with valid Tufts I.D.; $7.00 seniors; $7.00 opening night tickets on Tuesday, April 8, and $1.00 tickets on Thursday, 4/10. MasterCard, Visa and Discover are accepted. Box Office hours are 9 am-5 pm, Monday through Friday, the evening of performances, and at noon on the Saturdays of performances. Group rates are available. Tickets go on sale on 3/24/14. For reservations and information, please call (617) 627-3493.