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January, 2007

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IN THIS ISSUE:

Jean Racine's BRITANNICUS

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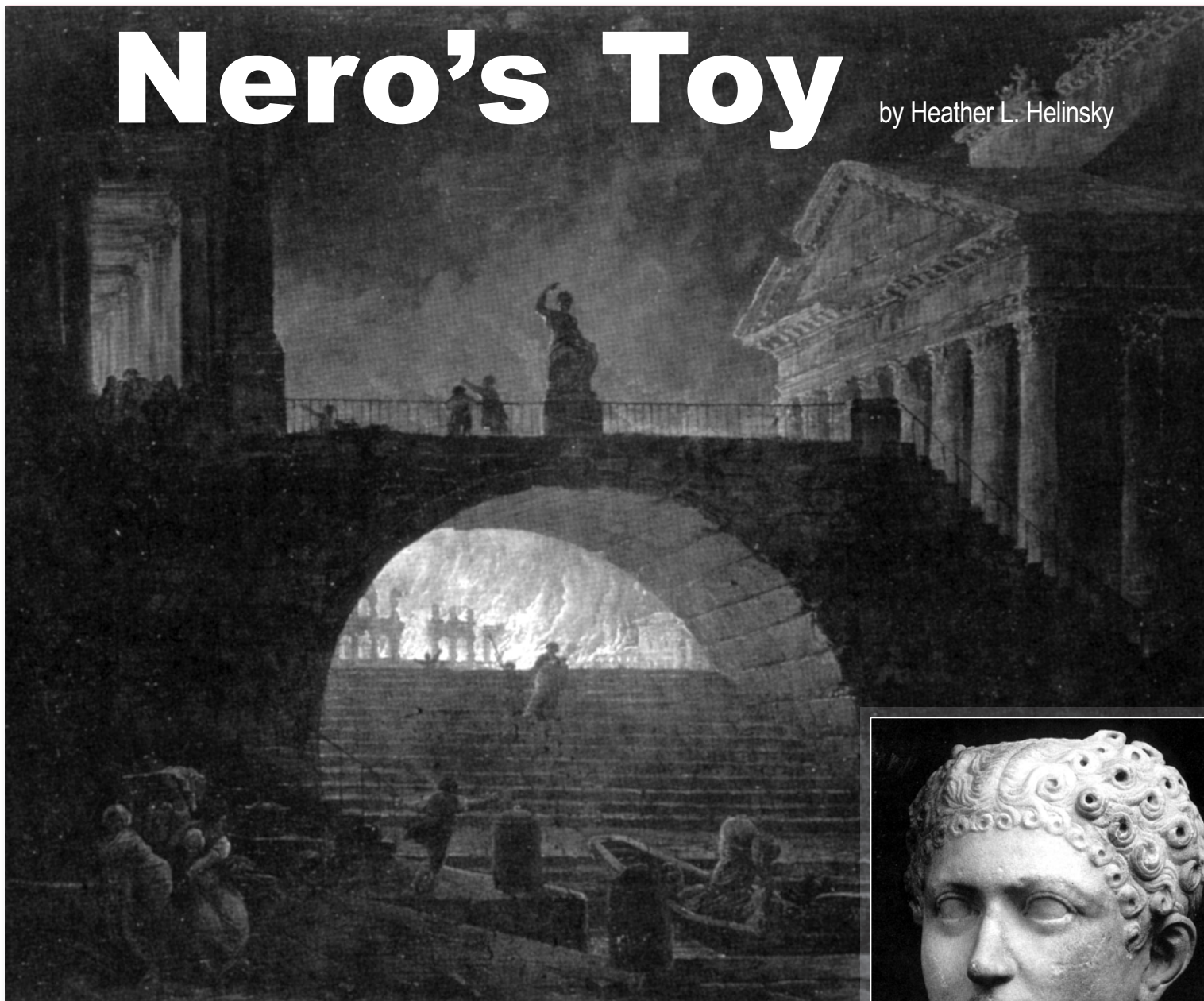


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Nero's Toy

by Heather L. Helinsky



The Roman Empire became Nero's toy at age seventeen. By age thirty-two, Nero plummeted it into civil war, ending the Julio-Claudian dynasty. Flaunting his money, torturing his subjects, killing those closest to him, Nero's actions show that he had power over everything — except himself.

Nero was not a one-dimensional leader, however, but an odd mixture of good and evil in which evil eventually won out. In Nero, we see both the rational and irrational forces that drive all of us: the yearning for love, beauty, and independence alongside the need to dominate, hurt, and destroy. Those complex needs, projected on the vast stage of the Roman Empire, turned Nero into the stuff of legend.

When Nero was born, the Empire had become a military state. Nero's uncle Claudius had used the power of the Praetorian Guard to declare himself Emperor. The members of the Julio-Claudian family lost themselves in plots and counter plots to gain power. Agrippina, Nero's mother, was a product of this environment and saw in her only son an opportunity to seize the throne. By the time Nero was eleven, Agrippina had scandalized Rome by marrying her Uncle Claudius to put Nero in a power play with Claudius's son Britannicus.

Because of her schemes, Agrippina was exiled, separating Nero from his mother at an early age. When Agrippina returned, she kept Nero on a tight leash, knowing her son was a useful card to play at court. In her struggle with Messalina, Claudius's third wife, Agrippina's behavior was described by the Roman historian Suetonius as "masculine." She gained more power at court than any other woman had achieved before. She had a special door built at the rear of the Senate so that screened from view, she could listen to all discus-

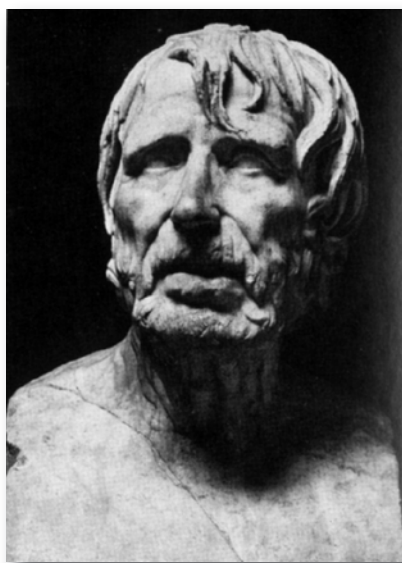
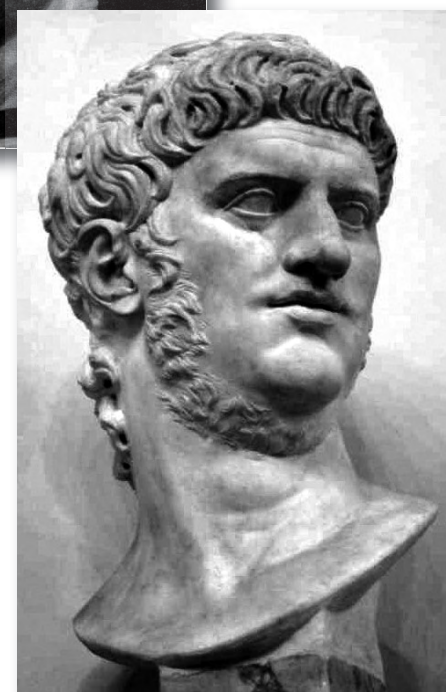
sions that went on. Her presence was not a secret, but a woman could not attend the Senate openly.

Agrippina also controlled Nero by carefully choosing his tutors: Seneca, the exiled philosopher, and Burrhus, the head of the Praetorian Guard.

Even before Claudius died, Nero began to gain popularity with the Senate by delivering speeches written by Seneca. On the day of Nero's ascension, the secret password given to the Praetorian Guard was "Best of Mothers." What Agrippina did not expect was that once Nero became Emperor, Burrhus and Seneca would advise him to act independently of his controlling mother. Given this encouragement, Nero began to make

decisions as an act of adolescent rebellion against Agrippina.

The beginning of Nero's reign promised renewal for Rome. The new Emperor revoked many of Claudius' unpopular policies. Nero himself invoked Augustus, the first Emperor, promising a return to the golden days of his reign. After providing a lavish funeral for his adopted father, Claudius, Nero's first declarations brought peace to the Empire, corrected the corruption of the court system, and honored the Senate's integrity. He also promised that "the home and state would be separate," a public acknowledgement that his personal life would not interfere with his reign. He also ingratiated himself to the public by abolishing some of Claudius's heavier taxes, distributing forty gold



pieces to each citizen, and increasing the salaries of Senators. When asked to sign the execution order for a criminal, he lamented "Ah, how I wish that I never learned to write!" However, none of these policies indicate if Nero was acting from personal benevolence or if he was following his advisors. Because Seneca wrote his speeches, many believe that these early policies only disguised Nero's cruel nature.

Nero sought to display his power through public entertainments, including theatrical performances and chariot racing. But the Emperor shocked his subjects

by participating in these extravaganzas because he prided himself on his singing and lyre playing. His acted in such plays as **Distraught Hercules**, **Oedipus**, and ironically, **Orestes the Matricide**. For traditionalists, this activity was more suited to a slave than to the ruler of the Roman Empire.

Nero's sexual behavior also raised eyebrows. Some rumored that he committed incest with his mother. Bored with his virtuous child-bride Octavia, Nero fell in love

with Acte, a slave girl at the palace. Driven by passion, he tried to elevate her as a princess from Greece to legitimize his affair. What became a pattern in Nero's erotic obsessions was his penchant for older, dominating women, replacing his love for Agrippina. One of his mistresses even resembled his mother physically. He divorced Octavia to marry Poppea, the beautiful, older wife of Nero's close associate Otho. After three years of marriage to Poppea, Nero kicked his pregnant wife in the stomach, killing both her and their unborn child.

Nero's sexual appetites are legendary. Dissatisfied with the women in his life, Nero also took male lovers, a common practice in Rome. One of his lovers was the handsome actor Pallas. His next wedding was a mock ceremony in full view of the court with Sporus, a boy he had castrated and dressed in the clothes of an Empress. A common joke in those times was that the world would have been a happier place if Nero's father Domitius had married that sort of wife.

Since male lovers were common, what made Nero's sexual behavior so scandalous that even Petronius, author of *The Satyricon*, found Nero's behavior deviant? Nero had grown into a sexual monster, dressing in the skins of wild animals and attacking the genitals of men and women who were tied to stakes. This sexual cruelty revolted even the Romans. Petronius' *The Satyricon* portrays a world in which all beliefs have crumbled and all classes were affected by Nero's hedonism and sadism. Nero made his personal passions public policy by declaring that if anyone confessed to sharing similar practices, the Emperor would forgive him of all his other crimes.

These public scandals, including Nero's addiction to theatrical performances, caused a public outcry that led to his downfall. Ignoring pressing military matters and threats of rebellion in Jerusalem, Nero planned a lavish trip to Greece to perform in musical competitions. "The Greeks alone," said Nero, "are worthy of my genius, they really listen to my music." But in Greece he stunned audiences with his lack of talent.

Back in Rome, Nero received a warning that a rebellion was beginning in Gaul. He ignored these warnings until the Senate, emboldened by the future Emperor Galba's approaching army, saw their opportunity. Declared an enemy of the state, Nero fled the palace in the middle of the night. "Life has become ugly and vulgar" he exclaimed, stabbing himself in the throat with the help of his scribe Epaphroditus. Although efforts were made to tend his wounds, Nero, resigned to his fate, sighed: "What an artist dies with me!"

Heather L. Helinsky is a second-year dramaturgy student at the A.R.T./MXAT Institute for Advanced Theatre Training.

*top: Hubert Robert's (1733-1808) painting of the legend "Nero fiddled while Rome burned."
Busts of Agrippina (top), Nero (near above),
and Seneca, Nero's tutor (left).
next page: Nero and Agrippina.*



BRITANNICUS at a glance

January 20 — February 11 • Loeb Stage

by Jean Racine
translated by C.H. Sisson
directed by Robert Woodruff

set design Riccardo Hernandez
costume design Kaye Voyce
lighting design Christopher Akerlind
sound design David Remedios
video design Leah Gelpe

CAST

Nero Alfredo Narciso*
Britannicus Kevin O'Donnell*
Agrippina Joan MacIntosh*
Junia Merritt Janson
Burrhus John Sierros*
Narcissus David Wilson Barnes*
Albina Adrienne Krstansky*
Octavia Megan Roth

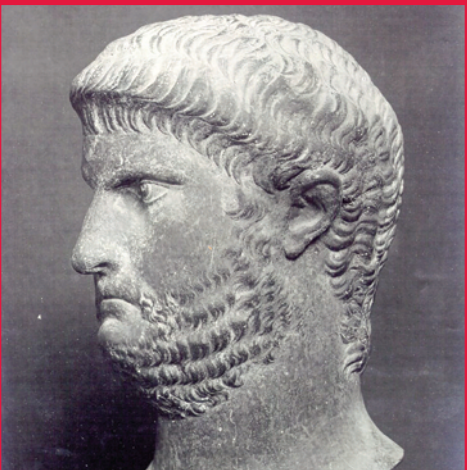
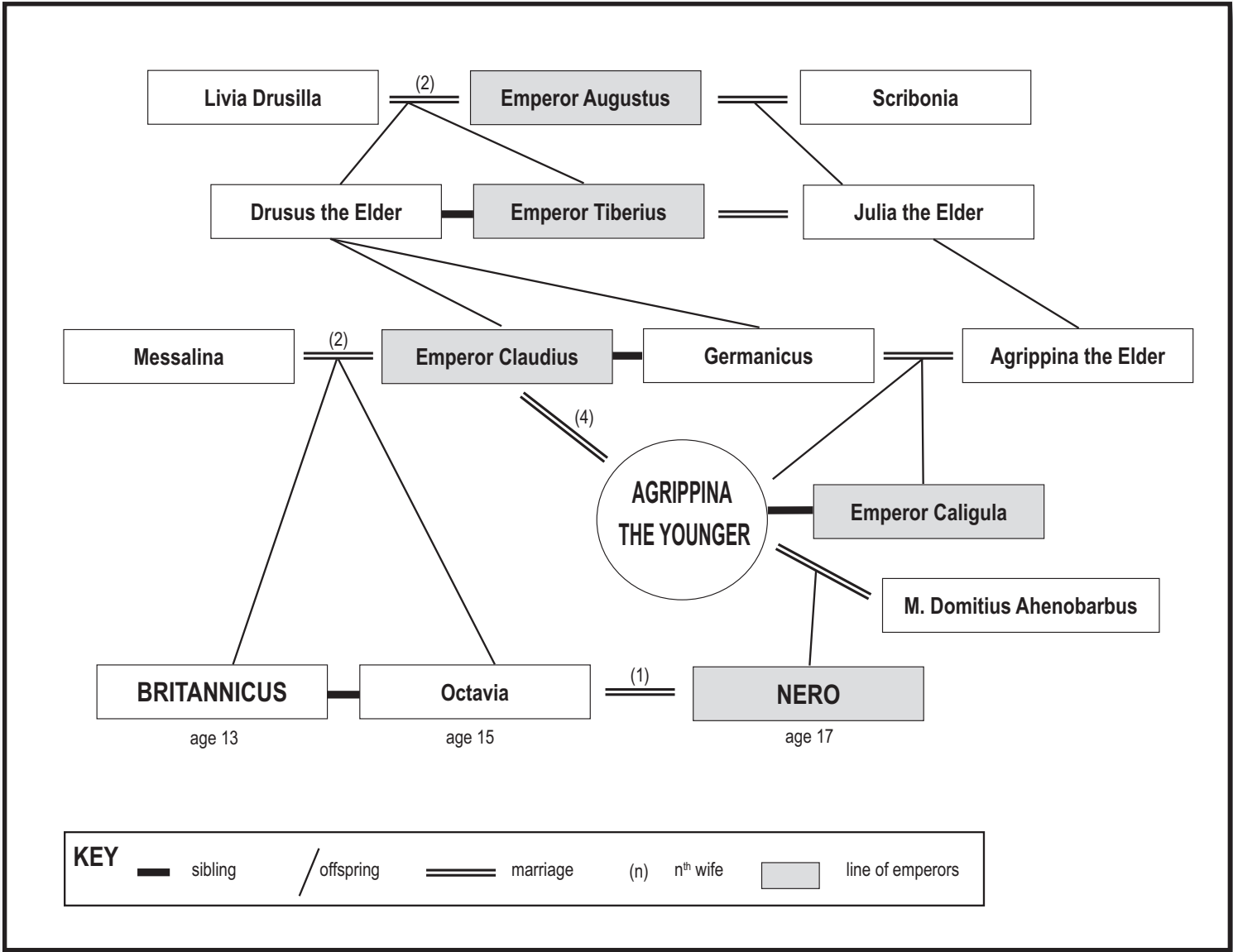
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SYNOPSIS

Agrippina, widow of the emperor Claudius, has had her son Nero named Emperor of Rome, in place of Claudius' son Britannicus. To maintain her hold over Nero, Agrippina has favored the marriage of Britannicus to Junia, a descendant of the Emperor Augustus. Fearing that such a marriage will strengthen his rival's claim to the throne, Nero abducts Junia. He himself then falls in love with her, and when she rejects him, he has Britannicus arrested. Agrippina appeals to Nero on behalf of Britannicus, and the court is riven with factions, intrigues, and murder that lead inexorably to a gripping and terrifying conclusion.

THE JULIO-CLAUDIAN DYNASTY



FREE READING OF BRITANNICUS in French

Monday, January 29, 7pm
West Lobby, Loeb Drama Center
Reception to follow

The American Repertory Theatre and Schoenhof's Foreign Books present a free reading of Jean Racine's **Britannicus** in French. Please join us for a reading of the script in its original language followed by a brief discussion about Robert Woodruff's contemporary staging of the play. Afterwards, the Cultural Services of the French Consulate will host a reception with complimentary beverages and hors d'oeuvres.



Falling from Grace

by Sarah Wallace



In 1663 Jean Racine wrote two odes honoring Louis XIV: “On the Convalescence of the King” and “The Fame of the Muses.” These works earned him the privilege to witness the king’s awakening in his private chamber. Louis XIV granted the privilege to attend this solemn ceremony, a major ritual of his court, only to those he deemed worthy of his esteem, usually those with the bluest blood. In a world that rested on the approval of one man, Racine’s participation in this custom symbolized his success.

Conforming to the King’s whims was essential to anyone who wished to advance in society. Pleasing the crown was more important to an artist’s career than winning the public and critics. Racine had both the talent and disposition of a courtier, and he rose quickly in the King’s favor. As he ascended the ranks of venerated artists, he witnessed the inner workings of Louis’ reign. **Britannicus** reflects what Racine observed at court, and the play functions as a double caveat to Louis XIV. Racine uses the Roman Emperor Nero’s fall from grace as a warning to Louis of the dangers of being swayed by bad advisors as well as the ebbing of morality as power is gained.

The parallels between the world of **Britannicus** and the seventeenth-century French court are striking, particularly the similarities between Nero and Louis. Racine dramatizes the moment when Nero transforms into a monster. In his first preface to the play he wrote, “I always thought that the very name Nero conjures something worse than cruel.” The play does not propose that Louis XIV is a tyrant, only that he has the potential to become one. Racine suggests in **Britannicus** that Louis must make the decision not to follow the path Nero descends.

Racine’s knowledge of Nero stemmed from his days as a student at the finest schools in France, where education focused on classic texts. Students composed prose and poetry in French and Latin, using ancient Roman and Greek works as models. To write **Britannicus**, Racine needed only to look back on the plays and histories he had read years earlier. In these Latin sources — Tacitus’ *Annals*, Seneca’s *De Clementia*, Suetonius’ *The Twelve Caesars* — Racine found his dramatic material.

The parallels between Nero and Louis XIV begin from the earliest days of their reigns. Both men ascended the throne in their youth — Nero at

seventeen, Louis at four. The most striking similarity between the two, however, is that while both men were known as absolute monarchs, they held little power in the early days of their sovereignty. Nero ceded control to his mother Agrippina, and Louis to his mother, Anne of Austria and Cardinal Mazarin, the prime minister.

Nero owed his crown entirely to his mother. Machiavellian to the extreme, Agrippina lied, cheated, murdered, and slept her way to the highest echelons of Rome to install her son on the throne over others who held higher claims to it (including Britannicus). In the earliest days of his reign, Nero was emperor in name only; Agrippina ran the show. The first years of Nero’s rule, considered a high point in the Empire, succeeded due to her cunning. In **Britannicus**, Agrippina claims there was a time, “when the young Nero/ passed the court’s adoration onto me,/ when the whole burden of state fell upon me,/ when it was my order assembled the senate,/ and, hidden from view/ in its deliberations I was all powerful.” Nero, however, was not content to rule as a figurehead. Eventually he turned on his mother, assassinated her, and assumed absolute power.

The relationship between Louis XIV and his mother, Anne of Austria, never reached this level of tumult. While she wielded enormous power over him, and thus over France, their relationship remained relatively amicable until her death. Anne, however, never exerted the same control as Agrippina. Primary responsibility fell to Cardinal Mazarin, who enjoyed a close relationship with the Queen. Mazarin exerted great influence over Louis, behaving like a surrogate father. In 1660 Venetian ambassador Giovanni Batista Nani claimed, “the young king looks up to his mother with the greatest respect and never distances himself from her authority and her advice . . . but all his affection seems to be devoted to the cardinal [Mazarin]. . . . There is a deep sympathy, a submission of minds and intellects.” Louis did not have to assume the burden of ruling until Mazarin’s death in 1661.

With Mazarin and Anne running the country, Louis was free to chase sensuous pleasures — women and art. The king pursued both with gusto. A patron of the arts, Louis fancied himself an artist. As a young man he participated in numerous ballets, most famously the *Ballet de la nuit* in which he danced the part of the sun, immortalizing him as “the Sun King.” He pursued women with equal ardor, yet his paramours rarely left an impression on him. The exception was Mazarin’s niece, Marie Mancini, to whom he developed a deep attachment. After his marriage to Maria-Teresa of Spain was arranged, Marie was forced to leave court. Her departure created animosity between Louis and his mother; Anne insisted he forgo his mistress in favor of a political marriage.

Racine echoed these aspects of Louis’ life in **Britannicus**, adjusting similarities into his chronicle of Nero’s fall. Nero also saw himself as an artist, developing a passion for numerous musical instruments. He often forced his court to attend concerts where he performed for hours. Racine dramatizes that Nero lives for, “throwing his voice away upon

the stage,/ reciting his poems he wants thought masterpieces,/ while soldiers are there to make sure the crowd/ will all the time bellow out its applause.” He too engaged in numerous love affairs. While his obsession with Junia in **Britannicus** is Racine’s invention, his appetite for women was not. He ignored his wife Octavia for a bevy of concubines, from slaves to noblewomen.

Racine emphasized these parallels in **Britannicus** because Louis’ reign hung in a moral balance. After Mazarin’s death, a struggle emerged over who would gain the King’s ear. Nicholas Fouquet, superintendent of finances, expected to be made head of government. Apprehensive of Fouquet’s drive for power, Louis declared he would fill this function, transforming himself into an absolute monarch. He followed Mazarin’s credo, “do not let yourself be governed, be the master; never have either favorites or a prime minister, listen to, consult your council, but decide yourself: God, who has made you a king, will give you the necessary wisdom so long as your intentions are good.”

Britannicus supports this philosophy, yet Racine was still wary of his King. Like Nero, he could commit depraved acts in the name of his country and think himself in the right. Racine’s play claims that Louis had the potential to become a tyrant and dramatizes the moral battle raging in his soul.

Racine’s anxiety over Louis’ morality came from not only concern for France but also from a more personal place. Racine struggled with his own morality throughout his adult life; he believed that a moral life was religious, an immoral life, secular. This philosophy grew from his upbringing as a Jansenist at Port-Royal, a convent-village outside Paris. Jansenism was a branch of Catholicism that emphasized original sin, human depravity, the necessity of divine grace, and predestination. It maintained a tragic theology — one must struggle in an evil world dominated by selfishness and greed without hope of victory. Acts were good if performed out of love for God and sinful if performed out of love for self. Aesthetic and sensual pleasures were taboo; theatre in particular revolted the Jansenists. Although the Vatican condemned Jansenism as heretical, pressuring Louis XIV to put a stop to it, this world view shaped Racine’s.

Throughout his childhood and youth, Racine lived faithfully by these ideas. Once in Paris, however, he emancipated himself from the religion that had previously guided his life. His rise in status at the French court came at expense of his relationship with Port-Royal. His former teacher, Pierre Nicole, publicly stated that novelists and playwrights were the moral equivalent of

a “public poisoner.” Racine claimed, “I keep getting [from Port-Royal] every day letter after letter, or, to put it better, excommunication after excommunication on account of my unlucky sonnet.” This “unlucky sonnet” references a poem he wrote for Mazarin which enraged the Jansenists, who had been persecuted by the Prime Minister.

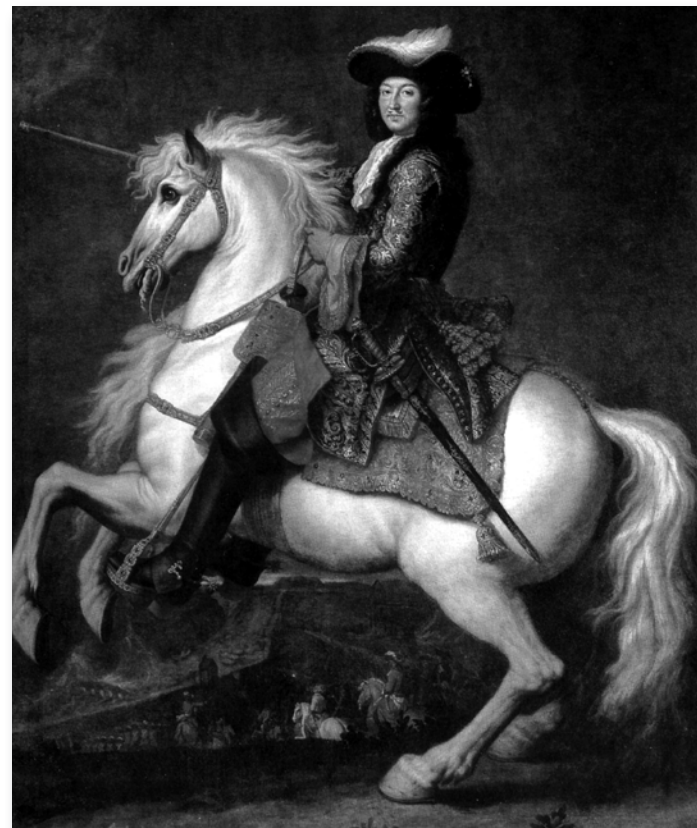
Even as his success in Paris grew, his years as a devout Jansenist never left him. He wrote, “My God, what a bitter war! There are two men within me: one that wishes that my heart, filled with love for Thee, should remain loyal to Thee. The other, rebelling against Thy will, turns me against Thy law. The former, spiritual and celestial, would that, constantly turned to heaven and affected by eternal values alone, I disregarded all else, while the latter drags me down to earth with its terrible weight. Alas, where can I find peace in this war with myself? I am all desire but, oh wretch that I am, I do not do the good that I love and do the evil I hate.”

He eventually renounced the theatre and dedicated himself fully to religious devotion. This religious rebirth damaged his relationship with the King.

Britannicus reflects characters morally at war with themselves or at the precipice of a fall from grace. Even as Racine engaged in numerous romantic liaisons and profited as a playwright, devotion to the flesh and the arts disturbed him. In **Britannicus**, he addressed this moral dichotomy as well as his political concerns. He created a Nero in the image of Louis XIV, who existed at the dawn of his despotism. Racine stated of Nero, “I have always thought of him as a monster. But here he is a budding monster.” Fearful of the monster in himself, fearful of the monster in the King, Racine hoped to prevent a descent into vice. When **Britannicus** premiered in 1669, Louis still had time to reign as a moral, if absolute monarch.

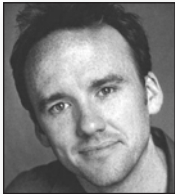
Sarah Wallace is a first-year dramaturgy student at the A.R.T./MXAT Institute for Advanced Theatre Training.

top left: Jean Racine (1639-99).
above left: Nero orating as a child.
below: Louis XIV on horseback.



WELCOME TO THE WINTER ACTING COMPANY

BRITANNICUS Acting Company



DAVID WILSON BARNES* — *Narcissus*
A.R.T.: **Olly's Prison** (Frank). New York: **The Lieutenant of Inishmore**, Broadway; **Saint Crispin's Day**, Rattlestick Theatre; **Men Without Shadows**, Flea; **Jersey Story**, Cherry Lane; **The Square**, Ma Yi/The Public Theatre; **Hamlet**, The Public Theater; **Mirandolina**, The Pearl; **The Caucasian Chalk Circle** and **The Bald Soprano**, La Mama, ETC; **Hedda Gabler**, Horace Mann Theatre. Resident credits: **The Scene**, **Red Herring**, **Quake**, Actors' Theatre of Louisville; **John Bull's Other Island**, GeVa Theatre; **Chesapeake**, The City Theatre; **Greetings**, Virginia Stage Co.; **The Story**, Long Wharf; **The Best Man**, **The Lion in Winter**, Cape Playhouse. Television: *Law and Order*, *L & O: Criminal Intent*, *L & O: Special Victims Unit*, *Conviction*, *Sex and the City*. Film: *Capite*, *How to Seduce Difficult Women*, *Ozark Savage*, *Extreme Moon*.



MERRITT JANSON — *Junia*
A.R.T.: **The Onion Cellar**. Second-year acting student at A.R.T./MXAT Institute for Advanced Theatre Training. Institute credits: **Zoya's Apartment** (Zoya); **War and Peace** (Natasha/Countess Rostov). Regional: **Tuesday** (2005 Barrymore Award - Outstanding Ensemble), Amaryliss Theatre Co., Philadelphia;

HurlyBurly (Bonnie), **Drive to a Departing Flight** (Maggie), Adrienne Theatre, Philadelphia. New York: **Three Years from Thirty** (Ashley), Pantheon Theatre; **Daddy Longlegs in the Evening** (Kate), Chashama; **Cavalleria Rusticana**, Opera of the Hamptons. Film: *Mail Order Wife* (Best American Film - 2005 Santa Barbara International Film Festival), First Independent Pictures; *Otto and Anna*.



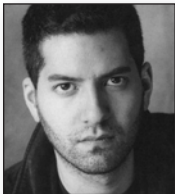
ADRIENNE KRSTANSKY* — *Albina*
A.R.T.: **Ubu Rock** (Queen Rosamund). Other: **Laundry and Bourbon**, Young Vic, London; **Luck, Pluck and Virtue**, Atlantic Theater and La Jolla Playhouse; **A Clockwork Orange** and **Twelfth Night**, Steppenwolf Theatre; **Closer**, Wellfleet Harbor Actors Theatre;

Frozen, New Repertory Theatre; **Bug**, Boston TheaterWorks; Danny and the Deep Blue Sea, Vineyard Playhouse; among others. She directed the New England premiere of **Thom Pain: Based on Nothing** at New Repertory Theatre, and teaches acting at Brandeis University.



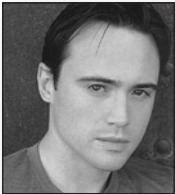
JOAN MACINTOSH* — *Agrippina*
A.R.T.: **The Balcony** (Mme. Irma.) Broadway: **Orpheus Descending**, **Our Town**, **The Seagull**, **Abe Lincoln in Illinois**. New York Shakespeare Festival: **Alice in Concert**, **Dispatches**, **Three Acts of Recognition**, **A Bright Room Called Day**, **Julius Caesar**, **Cymbeline**, **All's Well that Ends Well**, **Macbeth**,

365 Days/365 Plays. New York Theatre Workshop: **More Stately Mansions** (OBIE Award, Drama League Award, The Herald Angel Award: Edinburgh Festival.), **Alice in Bed**, with Ivo van Hove and the Toneelgroep Amsterdam in New York, Holland, and Belgium. Off Broadway: **Request Concert** (Drama Desk Award), **Night Sky**, **Endgame**, **A Shayna Maidel**. Resident theatre: **King Lear**, **Hedda Gabler**, **Three Sisters**, **Plenty**, **Happy End**, **Les Liaisons Dangereuses**, **Sore Throats**, **By the Bog of Cats**, **Elizabeth I: Almost by Chance a Woman**. The Performance Group: **Dionysus in '69** (OBIE), **Commune** (OBIE), **The Tooth of Crime** (OBIE), **Mother Courage**, **The Marilyn Project**, **Seneca's Oedipus**. Ms. MacIntosh has also won the OBIE for Sustained Excellence of Performance. She has received the John D. Rockefeller III, USIA, ITI, and Spencer Cherashore grants for her work as an actress and writer, and is a Fox Fellow. She has taught acting all over the world, and has a healing practice. Television: *The West Wing*, *Law and Order*, *Lincoln and Seward*, *Fool's Fire*, numerous daytime shows. Film: *Awakenings*, *A Flash of Green*, *The Confession*, *Fresh Horses*.



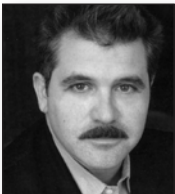
ALFREDO NARCISO* — *Nero*
Broadway: **A Streetcar Named Desire** (Roundabout). Off-Broadway: Michael John Garces' **Points of Departure** (Intar), **Split Wide Open** (SPF), **Good Thing** (New Group). Off-Off-Broadway: Sheila Callaghan's **Dead City** (New Georges), **The Dispute** (NAATCO),

'Nami (Partial Comfort Productions), the OBIE-winning **Benten Kozo**, **Baal**, **A Heartbeat to Baghdad**, **Transatlantica**, and Alice Tuan's **Ajax** (Por Nobody) - which also participated in the 2001 Melbourne Fringe Festival, **Au** (Flea Theatre). Regional: Olympia Dukakis' **The Tempest Project** (Long Wharf), Nilo Cruz's **A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings** (STNJ), **Much Ado About Nothing**, **Comedy of Errors** (Princeton Rep.) **Off the Page** (2003 HBO Comedy Arts Festival in Aspen, CO.). Film/TV: *The Guys*, *Living & Dining*, *Law & Order*, *L&O: Criminal Intent*, *Third Watch*, *Tough Crowd With Colin Quinn*. 2006 recipient of the *New Dramatists'* Charles Bowden Award.



KEVIN O'DONNELL* — *Britannicus*
Off-Broadway: **The Hairy Ape**, The Irish Repertory Theatre. Off-Off Broadway: **The Comedy of Errors**, Gallery Players. Regional: **Hamlet** (Laertes), Shakespeare & Company; **Hurry!**, **The Glory of God**, and **Hamlet** (Horatio), The Guthrie Theater; **The School for Scandal** (Charles Surface, with Brian

Bedford), The Mark Taper Forum; **Thief River** (Gil/Jody, directed by Andrew Volkoff), Barrington Stage Company; **A Midsummer Night's Dream** and **The Skin of Our Teeth**, Chautauqua Theatre Company. Other: **Romeo and Juliet** (Romeo) with dancers from the American Ballet Theatre as part of the Guggenheim Museum's 'Works in Process' series. Film: *Black Irish*, *Opa*, *Shaft*, *A Million Miles An Hour*. Television: Comedy Central's "Strangers With Candy". Native of the Boston area, received his Literature and Creative Writing BFA from Emerson College; Graduate of The Juilliard School (Group 33). His short play, **No More Static**, was commissioned by The Guthrie Theater and produced at The Guthrie Lab; later included in *The Best Ten-Minute Plays of 2004 for 3 or More Actors*, published by Smith and Krause and PlayScripts.net. *Penance*, his original screenplay was recently optioned by MCPFilms of Boston. The film is currently scheduled to begin shooting in Massachusetts in the fall of 2007 with Mr. O'Donnell playing a starring role.



JOHN SIERROS* — *Burrhus*
New York credits: **Hot & Sweet** (Joey, dir. John Driver), New York Musical Theater Festival; **Flesh and Blood** (Constantine, dir. Dough Hughes; with Cherry Jones and Martha Plimpton); New York Theater Workshop; **Agamemnon** (the Messenger, dir. Robert Richmond; with Olympia Dukakis and Louis Zorich),

Aquila Theater. Regional: **The Heart is a Lonely Hunter** (Antonopoulos, dir. Doug Hughes), Alliance Theatre/The Acting Company; **Mother Courage** (Sergeant, dir. Eric Simonson, with Lois Smith and Sally Murphy), the world premiere of Charles Mee's **Time To Burn** (the Cop, dir. Tina Landau, Joseph Jefferson Award for Best Ensemble), the Midwestern premiere of **The Weir** (Brendan, dir. Amy Morton), Steppenwolf Theatre Company; **Dylan** (Dylan, dir. Roger Smart, Joseph Jefferson Award Best Actor), Seanachai Theater Company; the world premiere of **Among the Thugs** (Mick, dir. Kate Buckley, Joseph Jefferson Award Best Ensemble), The Next Theatre. Films: *Taxi*, *The Departed* (audio dialogue replacement), Project Greenlight's *Stolen Summer*, *Road to Perdition*, the upcoming short *Haber*; and in development as actor and executive producer, *Gems* with Olympia Dukakis.

OLIVER TWIST Acting Company



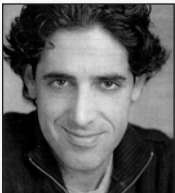
REMO AIRALDI* — *Mr. Bumble*
A.R.T.: Fifty productions, including **The Onion Cellar**, **Island of Slaves**, **Romeo and Juliet** (Peter), **No Exit** (Valet), **Amerika** (Captain, Green, Head Porter), **Dido**, **Queen of Carthage** (Nurse), **The Provok'd Wife** (Constable), **The Miser** (Master Jacques), **The Birthday Party** (McCann), **A Midsummer Night's Dream**

(Francis Flute), **Pericles** (Fisherman), **La Dispute** (Mesrou), **Uncle Vanya** (Telegin), **Marat/Sade** (Cucurucu), **Enrico IV** (Bertoldo), **The Winter's Tale** (Clown), **The Wild Duck** (Molvik), **Buried Child** (Father Dewis), **Tartuffe** (Monsieur Loyal), **Henry IV and V** (Mistress Quickly), **Waiting for Godot** (Pozzo), **Shlemiel the First** (Mottel/Moishe Pippik/Chaim Rascal), **The King Stag** (Cigolotti), **Six Characters in Search of an Author** (Emilio Paz). Other: **Camino Real** and **Eight by Tenn** (Hartford Stage), productions at La Jolla Playhouse, Geffen Playhouse, American Conservatory Theater, Walnut St. Theatre, Prince Music Theater, Actors' Theatre of Louisville, Serious Fun Festival, Moscow Art Theatre, Taipei International Arts Festival, Boston Playwrights Theatre.



STEVEN BOYER* — *Noah Claypole/ Tom Chilling*

Broadway: **I'm not Rappaport** (dir. Daniel Sullivan), also at Coconut Grove, Ford's Theatre, Papermill Playhouse. Other New York: **I Hear Kant**, **The Mooncalf**, **Which Wolf is Which**, Michael John Graces' **Audio/Video**, **Day**. Regional: **The Underpants**, Capitol Repertory; **Camille**, Bard Summerscape; **Act a Lady**, Humana Festival-Actors' Theatre of Louisville; **Dylan's Line**, **The Last of the Boys**, McCarter Theater; **The Drawer Boy**, Merrimack Repertory Theatre; **Hamlet**, **Comedy of Errors**, Shakespeare Santa Cruz; **Camelot**, Berkshire Theatre Festival. Television: *Ed*, *Law and Order*, *House of Detention* (Pilot). BFA from Juilliard School. Standup comedian and writer, performed at clubs and colleges around the country, work includes voiceovers and audio books.



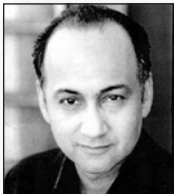
GREGORY DERELIAN* — *Bill*
Broadway: **Metamorphoses**, Circle in the Square. Off-Broadway: **As You Like It**, **Henry V**, **Othello**, New York Shakespeare Festival. Resident: **Julius Caesar** (Mark Anthony), **Macbeth** (McDuff), **Othello** (Cassio), **The Tempest** (Caliban), **The Forest** (Pyotr), Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey; **The Blue Demon** (Sultan),

Huntington Theatre; **The Visit** (Mike), Williamstown Theater Festival; **The Birds** (Mitch), Yale Repertory Theatre; **Lover's Leap** (Ernie), Fulton Opera House; **Baby With the Bathwater** (Daisy), What Exit? Theater Company. Films and television: *The Pizza Boy*, *Blur of Insanity*, *Cinco de Mayo*, *Wanda*, *All my Children*, *Guiding Light*, *As the World Turns*. MFA in acting from the Yale School of Drama.



THOMAS DERRAH* — *Mr. Sowerberry/ Mr. Grimwig*
A.R.T.: **The Onion Cellar**, **Island of Slaves** (Trivelin), **Three Sisters** (Chebutykin), **Carmen** (Zuniga), **Olly's Prison** (Barry), **The Birthday Party** (Stanley), **A Midsummer Night's Dream** (Nick Bottom), **Highway Ulysses** (Ulysses), **Uncle Vanya** (Vanya),

Marat/Sade (Marquis de Sade), Richard II (Richard), **Mother Courage** (Chaplain), **Charlie in the House of Rue** (Charlie Chaplin), **Woyzeck** (Woyzeck). Broadway: **Jackie: An American Life** (twenty-three roles). Off-Broadway: **Johan Padan and the Discovery of the Americas** (Johan), **Big Time** (Ted). Tours with the Company across the U.S., with residencies in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, and throughout Europe, Canada, Israel, Taiwan, Japan, and Moscow. Other: **I Am My Own Wife**, Boston TheatreWorks; **Approaching Moomtaj**, New Repertory Theatre; **Twelfth Night** and **The Tempest**, Commonwealth Shakespeare Co.; London's Battersea Arts Center; five productions at Houston's Alley Theatre, including **Our Town** (Dr. Gibbs, directed by José Quintero); and many theatres throughout the U.S. Awards: 1994 Elliot Norton Prize for Sustained Excellence, 2000 and 2004 IRNE Awards for Best Actor, 1997 Los Angeles DramaLogue Award (for title role of **Shlemiel the First**). Television: Julie Taymor's film *Fool's Fire* (PBS American Playhouse), *Unsolved Mysteries*, *Del and Alex* (Alex, A&E Network). Film: *Mystic River* (directed by Clint Eastwood). He is a graduate of the Yale School of Drama.



NED EISENBERG* — *Fagin*
Broadway: **The Green Bird**. Other: **Awake and Sing**, Lincoln Center Theatre; **Guys and Dolls**, Long Wharf Theatre; **King John**, Titus Andronicus, Theatre for a New Audience; **Meshugah**, **Midnight and Morning Rain**, Naked Angels; **Street Scene**, Williamstown Theatre Festival; **The Red Address**, Second Stage; **Antigone in New York**, Vineyard Theatre; **Pal Joey**, City Centre, **The Middle of Nowhere**, Prince Music Theatre. Films: *World Trade Center*, *Flags of Our Fathers*, *Million Dollar Baby*, *Head of State*, *Let it Snow*, *A Civil Action*, *Winchell*, *Celebrity*, *Primary Colors*, *Last Man Standing*, *Air America*, *Hiding Out*, *Moving Violations*, *Key Exchange*, among many others. Television: *Rescue Me*, *The Jury*, *Black Donnellys*, *Cheaters*, *The Sopranos*, *The Fanelli Boys*, *Wonderland*, *New York Undercover*, *Law & Order*, *Law & Order: SVU*, *LA Law*, *Crime Story*, *Miami Vice*, *LA Dragnet*, *Whoopi*, *Ed*, *Criminal Intent*, *The Equalizer*, among many.

CARSON ELROD* — *John Dawkins, the Artful Dodger*
Broadway: **Reckless**, **Noises Off** (Tim). Other: **House/Garden** (Jake), **Comic Potential**, Manhattan Theatre Club; **Cavedweller**, New York Theatre Festival; **Waiting for Godot** (Vladimir), East River Amphitheatre; **The Cherry Orchard** (Yepikodoff) and **The Intelligent Design of**



Jenny Chow (Todd), Yale Repertory Theatre; **Misalliance** (Gunner), Baltimore Center Stage; **Our Town** (George), La Jolla Playhouse; **The Comedy of Errors** (Dromio of Syracuse), **The Merry Wives of Windsor** (Pistol), Colorado Shakespeare Festival and Shakespeare & Co; **Loves' Labour's Lost** (King of Navarre), Shakespeare & Co; **Twelfth Night** (Feste), **Romeo and Juliet** (Mercutio), Sedona Shakespeare Festival. Television and film: *Out of Practice*, *Medium*, *When a Stranger Calls*, *Carnivale*, *Girlfriends*, *Kissing Jessica Stein*, *Wedding Crashers*, among others. 1999 Princess Grace Award winner.



JENNIFER IKEDA* — *Nancy*
Broadway: **Seascape** (Sarah). New York: **As You Like It** (Celia), **The Two Noble Kinsmen** (Jailer's daughter), **As You Like It** (Audrey, Phoebe, Adam), New York Shakespeare Festival/Public Theater; **Coriolanus**, Theatre for a New Audience; **The Square** (various), Ma Yi @ the Public Theater. Resident: **The**

Tempest (Miranda), Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey; **Romeo and Juliet** (Juliet), The Shakespeare Theatre, Washington, DC and Shakespeare Festival of St. Louis; **Antigone** (Ismene), Chautauqua Conservatory Theater. Television and film: *Guiding Light*, *Heavy Petting*.



ELIZABETH JASICKI* — *Rose/ Charlotte*
New York: **Abigail's Party** (with Jennifer Jason Leigh), New Group, Theatre Row. England: **When Harry Met Sally**, West End; **As You Like It**, Peter Hall Company, Bath Theatre Royal and UK and US tour; **The Talented Mr. Ripley**, **Cancer Tales**, **Relatively Speaking**, **Man and Superman**, **Jane Eyre**, **Les Liaisons**

Dangereuses, **David Copperfield**, **The Wizard of Oz**, **They're Playing Our Song**, **Beauty and the Beast**. USA Tours: **Dracula**, **The Hunchback of Notre Dame**, **The Canterbury Tales**. Film and television: *Christie Malry's Own Double Entry*, *Room for Uncertainty*, *Summer Rain*, *Dinner in Purgatory*, *La Belle Sans Merci*, *The Vanishing Man*, *Watching the Detectives*; and *Buddha of Suburbia* for BBC.



WILL LeBOW* — *Mr. Brownlow*
A.R.T.: forty-six productions, including **Romeo and Juliet** (Capulet), **Three Sisters** (Kulygin), **No Exit** (Garcin), **Amerika** (Uncle Jacob, Innkeeperess, Head Waiter), **Dido**, **Queen of Carthage** (Jupiter), **The Miser** (Valère), **The Birthday Party** (Goldberg), **A Midsummer**

Night's Dream (Egeus/Peter Quince), **Pericles** (Cleon/Pandar), **Highway Ulysses** (ensemble), **Uncle Vanya** (Serebriakov), **Lysistrata** (Magistrate), **Marat/Sade** (Marat), **The Doctor's Dilemma** (Sir Ralph), **Nocturne** (Father - Drama Desk nomination), **Full Circle** (Heiner Müller - Elliot Norton Award for best actor), **The Merchant of Venice** (Shylock), **The Marriage of Bette and Boo** (Karl), **The Imaginary Invalid** (title role), **Shlemiel the First** (Shlemiel/Zalman Tippish - also on tours of the West Coast), **The Wild Duck** (Hjalmar Ekdal), **Picasso at the Lapin Agile** (Sagot), **The King Stag** (Brighella - a role he also performed in Taiwan), **Six Characters in Search of an Author** (The Father). Other: **Love's Labors Lost**, **The Rivals** and Melinda Lopez's **Sonia Flew** (Huntington Theatre), **Twelfth Night** (Feste, Commonwealth Shakespeare Company), Brian Friel's **Faith Healer** (Gloucester Stage Company), **Shear Madness** (all male roles), the Boston Pops premiere of "How the Grinch Stole Christmas"(narrator). Film: *Next Stop Wonderland*. Television: the Cable Ace Award-winning animated series *Dr. Katz, Professional Therapist* (voice of Stanley).



KAREN MacDONALD* — *Mrs. Bumble*
A.R.T.: founding member, fifty-nine productions. Recent seasons: **The Onion Cellar**, **Island of Slaves** (Euphrosine), **Romeo and Juliet** (Nurse), **No Exit** (Estelle, Elliot Norton Award), **Olly's Prison** (Ellen, Elliot Norton Award), **Dido**, **Queen of Carthage** (Anna), **The Provok'd Wife** (Mademoiselle, IRNE award), **The Miser**

(Frosine, IRNE award), **The Birthday Party** (Maguire Award), **A Midsummer Night's Dream** (Hypolita/Titania, IRNE award), **Pericles** (Dionysa), **Highway Ulysses** (Circe), **Uncle Vanya** (Marina), **Lysistrata** (Kalonika), **Mother Courage and Her Children** (Mother Courage), **Marat/Sade** (Simone), **Othello** (Emilia, IRNE award). Director of **Dressed Up! Wiggled Out!**, Boston Playwrights Theatre. New York: Roundabout Theatre, Second Stage, Playwright's Horizons, and Actors' Playhouse. Regional: **The Misanthrope** (Arsinoë), Berkshire Theatre Festival; **Infestation** (Mother), Boston Playwrights Theatre; **Hamlet** (Gertrude) and **Twelfth Night** (Maria), Commonwealth Shakespeare Company; **The Beauty Queen of Leenane** (Maureen) and **The Last Night of Ballyhoo** (Boo) Vineyard Playhouse; **Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf** (Martha, Elliot Norton Award) and **Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune** (Frankie), Merrimack Repertory Theatre; **As You Like It** (Rosalind), Shakespeare & Co; **Shirley Valentine** (Shirley), Charles Playhouse. Other: Alley Theatre (Company member), the Goodman Theatre, the Wilma Theatre, Long Wharf Theatre, Geva Theatre, Syracuse Stage, Buffalo Studio Arena, Cincinnati Playhouse, Hartford Stage, Philadelphia Festival of New Plays.



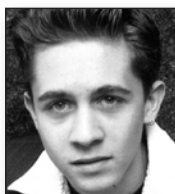
CRAIG PATTISON* — *Charley Bates*
Recent credits: **Jesus Hates Me**, Denver Center Theatre Company. New York: **Moonchildren**, **Pains of Youth**, HERE; **Three Birds**, Gale Gates; **The Maids**, Linhart, **Twenty Gorilla Killer**, Red Room. Other: **As You Like It**, **The Taming of the Shrew**, **The Real Thing**, Alabama Shakespeare Festival; **Camino Real**,

Glimmer Brothers, **'Tis Pity She's a Whore**, Williamstown Theatre Festival. Film: *The Thing About My Folks*, *The Franklin Abraham*.



LUCAS STEELE* — *Toby Crackit*
Broadway: **The Threepenny Opera** (Harry/Velma), The Roundabout Theatre Company. Other: **Corpus Christie** (Joshua), Bouwerie Lane Theatre; **Cheri**, The Actors Studio; **The Little Foxes** (Leo), Women's Project; **An Actor Prepares** (Trent), Vital Theatre Co.; **A Chorus Line** (Mark, original choreography), **My Fair**

Lady, Walnut Street Theater; **The Human Comedy**, Heart to Heart Productions. He is a singer, plays the piano and the violin, and was a member of a barbershop quartet for four years.



MICHAEL WARTELLA* — *Oliver Twist*
New York: **Macbeth** (Fléance), **Clown Shorts**, Circle in the Square. Other: **Once Upon a Mattress** (Clown), **Little Shop of Horrors** (Minstrel), **You're a Good Man Charlie Brown** (Snoopy), Barrington Stage Company; **Much Ado About Nothing** (Dogberry), **Hamlet** (Laertes), **Henry VI, Part I** (Talbot), Shakespeare and Company; **The Gifts of the Magi** (Willy Porter), Mixed Company.



OLIVER with a twist

by Sarah Olove

exist." Many novelists including Jane Austen, looked to theatrical conventions as models for their own work. Dickens was no exception.

When Dickens first arrived in London, only three theatres in the city possessed charters to

produce legally five act comedies or tragedies. That didn't stop cunning entrepreneurs from founding unlicensed theatres, but the law restricted them to musical drama — especially the popular burletta, a one-act farce with a minimum of five songs. The concept of the burletta eventually expanded to include operettas, burlesque, revues, and the melodrama. All these genres relied heavily on music to set the tone, and all mixed the grotesque with the comic.

The novel attempted to find a balance between the private experience of a reader and the idea of public entertainment. Like many other novelists of his day, Dickens's works read as if meant for a group, not just as a private pastime. Reading aloud was a common pastime in Victorian London, where illiteracy ruled. Around Dickens's study hung mirrors angled towards his face so that the writer could watch his own reactions to his work. If he laughed, a drawing room party might laugh; if a tear came to his eye, ladies might weep.

In addition, many novels appeared serially in newspapers prior to

their completion. This allowed an author to test the waters before completing a long work. Like an actor adapting his performance based upon audience's reactions, the novelist had ample opportunity to change his novel based on the reception of the first parts. Dickens even changed the end of *Great Expectations* to please the public.

The Victorian Englishman has a reputation as repressed, but his taste in entertainment was filled with emotion. Melodrama reigned as king of the Victorian Stage. Scenes of heightened tragedy alternated with low comedy, and music intensified emotions. Visual imagery and stage machinery often upstaged dialogue. When the modern audience thinks about melodrama, images of a beautiful, pale woman, swooning in the arms of a handsome — also pale — gentleman come to mind. No one envisions the following scene, in which the fat servant of the distressed woman gets his foot stuck in a pickle jar. But the absurdity of the humor throws the tragedy into sharp relief, heightening the impact of both. One sees the influence of melodrama in many of the great nineteenth century nov-

elists from Balzac to Dostoyevsky.

No one recognized melodrama's merits more than Dickens. Although the novels he wrote immediately before and after it have actors as important characters, *Oliver Twist* remains remarkably devoid of references to the theatre. He only writes of it in one passage of *Oliver Twist*:

"It is the custom on the stage, in all good murderous melodramas, to present the tragic and the comic scenes, in as regular alternation, as the layers of red and white in a side of streaky bacon. Such changes appear absurd; but they are not so unnatural as they would seem at first sight. The transitions in real life from well-spread boards to death beds, and from mourning weeds to holiday garments, are not a whit less startling; only, there, we are busy actors, instead of passive lookers-on, which makes a vast difference."

However, the stage infuses every part of the novel's form. Dickens knew that melodrama followed the quick jumps in tone that occur in life. This was a priceless recognition for a novelist adept at both pathos and wit. Like the melodramas, Dickens always captured accurately the ebullience and exhaustion of living.

Dickens also learned valuable lessons from another popular theatre of his day, the pantomime. The English pantomime inherited its theatrical tradition from the harlequinade of the Italian *commedia dell'arte*. Most pantomimes silently acted the same familiar story of two lovers, a fat father, an undesirable suitor, a clever servant, and plenty of clownish henchmen. The father and suitor make so much trouble for the lovers that it seems impossible for them to marry, until a good fairy enters and wins the day for love. These stock characters act predictably from scene to scene and play to play. Physical traits, and repeated tics, not psychological motives dictate actions. The external must convey all information; pantomime does not allow characters words.

Dickens enjoyed the pantomime, writing: "A pantomime is to us, a mirror of life." Dickens believed in the line "All the world's a stage," Shakespeare really meant: all the world's a pantomime. Dickens learned much from pantomime characters. Several pantomime characters became stock characters for Dickens — the ingenue, the meddling father, the unwanted suitor. Even those characters that do not come directly from pantomime behave like pantomime charac-

ters. Amazingly, Dickens avoids flat characters — a dangerous pratfall of archetypes. Of course, Dickens granted his characters the gift of speech, and so, unlike the chimerical pantomime lovers, *Oliver Twist*, Nancy Sikes and the other dramatic personae hover between realism and fantasy.

Fagin exemplifies the pantomime traits of Dickens's characters. An archetype of the seedy underbelly of Victorian England, Fagin also represents another stereotype — the greedy, amoral Jew. Dickens was hardly the first to take advantage of this stereotype for his villains. He descended from a long line of Englishmen — including Marlowe and Shakespeare — who drew upon cultural stereotypes to create monstrous Jews who leered at innocent children. In 1863, a woman named Eliza Davies, the wife of a Jewish banker, read *Oliver Twist*, and liked it very much, except for Fagin. She wrote a letter objecting to the characterization. Dickens's reply suggests he never considered that Fagin might be taken as a representation for a whole group of people and got defensive:

"I must take leave to say that if there be any general feeling on the part of the intelligent Jewish people that I have done to them what you describe as a great wrong, they are a far less sensible, a far less just and a far less good tempered people than I have always supposed them to be."

Later in the letter, he invites Mrs. Davies to see what he has made of her criticism in his next novel, *Our Mutual Friend*. Perhaps as way of apology, Dickens endowed the Jew in this novel, Riah, with an almost superhuman goodness, the exact opposite of Fagin. Though most of his characters were archetypes, Dickens did not want people to mistake his characters for generalizations of ethnicity. His characters are archetypes, not stereotypes.

In the nineteenth century, the novel soared to new heights while the theatre foundered. The stage could not ignore the emergence of the novel, nor should it, given such a valuable source of new material. The novel influenced the theatre at a time when the theatre needed it, and Dickens's keen understanding of dramatic form allowed him to make a major contribution. Edmund Wilson heralded Dickens as "the greatest dramatic writer the English had since Shakespeare." At a time when dramatic writers in London had hit a dry spell, Dickens breathed new life into a dying genre.

Adapting novels for the stage was inevitable but fraught with difficulties, both artistic and com-



mercial. Dickens might have overreacted to Almar's burletta, but it was the only action he could take. He had no legal recourse to protect his work. As his career evolved, so did the idea of the professional writer. When he wrote **Oliver Twist**, the rights of the novelist to own his work were shaky. Adaptations at this time spurred an examination of intellectual property and copyright. A bad adaptation could end the career of a fledgling writer, effectively curtailing his changes of rising in society. In a culture in which everyone attended the theatre, a good adaptation launched a writer successfully towards respectability.

Dickens feared bad adaptations for more reasons than his social status. In a letter about an adaptation of *Nicholas Nickleby*, he lists his concerns:

“My general objection to the adaptation of any unfinished work of mine simply is, that being badly done and worse acted it tends to vulgarize the characters, to destroy or weaken in the minds of those who see them the impressions I have endeavored to create, and consequently lessen the after-interest in their progress.”

Artistically Dickens worried that audiences, content with the ending offered by the adaptor, would not read the ending he wrote. Because Dickens often ended his novels after seeing several adaptations, he might well have altered his endings based on what he saw, complicating his process enormously. Furthermore, he grew concerned that adaptors would cheapen his novels, sacrificing artistic merit for the crass success of star actor-managers.

Despite his reservations about losing control of his work, Dickens's enthusiasm for the theatre never diminished. This ardor embraced good adaptations of his novels. In the same letter, he writes that “no objection can exist for a moment where the [adaptation] is so admirably done in every respect.” At one point, he even suggested that he might undertake the task himself. This idea never panned out, but Dickens relished the audience's public reaction to his text. He claimed that his novels had more power read aloud, though he liked his own readings best.

Actors found the roles in **Oliver Twist** irresistible. Actresses playing young, orphaned boys could pack a theatre faster than anything else in Victorian London. Many actresses made a career of it because the impoverished boy outlasted an actresses's looks. Likewise, the role of Bill Sikes enticed countless actors, hoping to find fame as great villains including Sir Henry Irving.

Though only Dickens's second novel, **Oliver Twist** remained the most frequently dramatized throughout his life, despite the fact that no less of an authority than William Charles Macready — Covent Garden's leading man — felt the material unsuitable for dramatization. Macready cited the breadth of scope in the novel as an insurmountable obstacle. The Victorians clearly disagreed. By 1870 at least 100 different Olivers had met

nine dozen Artful Dodgers.

Most adaptations took the form of a burletta including the requisite number of songs — a tradition of staging the novel that led directly to Lionel Bart's *Oliver!* However, the burletta was not the only theatrical genre to use the story of the orphan boy. Oliver and his comrades were popular characters in the toy theatre — in which the characters were made from mass produced sheets of paper and sold with paper proscenium, sets, and props. In the early twentieth century, burlesques were made satirizing both the material and the production history including “Oliver Twist; or Dickens up a Tree” and “Oliver Twisted.”

Throughout its long production history, **Oliver Twist** endured many shifts in theatrical taste. Initially, productions slavishly recreated tableau based upon original illustrations from the novel, commissioning sets from men who staked their reputations on exact replicas. These all but disappeared until the rise of film. The role of Oliver passed from the hands of women to young men and boys. **Oliver Twist** weathered method acting, radio, film, and the musical, all of which took to the material as fast as the Victorians.

If in 1838, Dickens had been granted the foresight to see what would happen to his novel, he

Dickens' enthusiasm for the theatre never diminished.

OLIVER TWIST at a glance

February 17 – March 24 • Loeb Stage

by Charles Dickens adapted and directed by Neil Bartlett

set and costume design
lighting design
music
music adaptor and director
movement director
sound design

Rae Smith
Scott Zielinski
Gerard McBurney
Simon Deacon
Struan Leslie
David Remedios

CAST

John Dawkins, the Artful Dodger
Oliver Twist
Mr. Bumble
Mrs. Bumble
Mr. Sowerberry/Mr. Grimwig/Mr. Fang
Bill Sykes/Mrs. Sowerberry
Nancy
Fagin
Noah Claypole/Tom Chitling
Charley Bates
Toby Crackit
Mr. Brownlow
Rose Brownlow/Charlotte Sowerberry

Carson Elrod*
Michael Wartella*
Remo Airdi*
Karen MacDonald
Thomas Derrah*
Greg Derelian*
Jennifer Ikeda*
Ned Eisenberg*
Steven Boyer*
Craig Pattison*
Lucas Steele*
Will LeBow*
Elizabeth Jasicki*

Major Production Sponsors

Philip and Hilary Burling Hod and Cassandra Irvine

SYNOPSIS

Oliver Twist is a young orphan who never knew his father. After his mother dies, he is raised in a harsh juvenile home, then at a workhouse, where he runs foul of the authorities by asking for more food. As punishment Oliver is apprenticed to an undertaker, but he escapes and makes his way to London, where he meets the Artful Dodger, a young pickpocket. Dodger introduces Oliver to a band of criminals led by Fagin and the murderous Bill Sikes, who train him in the art of picking pockets. Oliver's new life of crime leads him through a series of extraordinary adventures, culminating in a terrifying chase across the rooftops of London — and a chance encounter with a man who holds the secret of the boy's true identity.

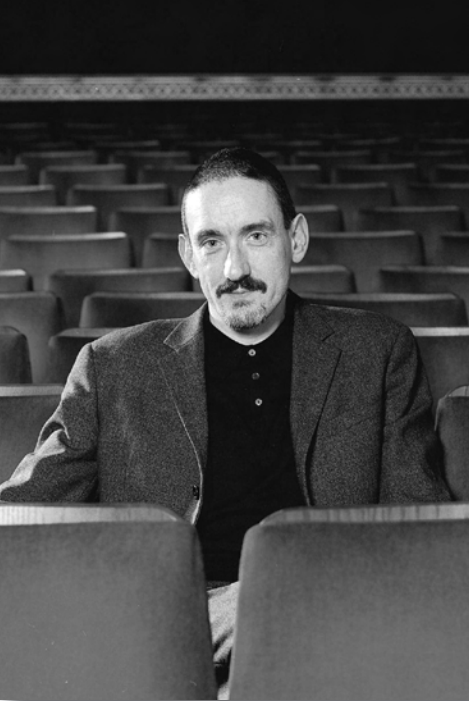
might have refused to get up from the floor of the box. However, being but mortal, Dickens did rise, and wrote some of the most beloved novels in English. Dickens owes not a little of his success to theatre. Without the example of the stage and without its help in spreading his popularity, he would never have stood so high.

Sarah Ollove is a first-year dramaturgy student at the A.R.T./MXAT Institute.

previous page, top left: a scene from the London production of **Oliver Twist**, adapted and directed by Neil Bartlett.
middle left: Oliver's reception by Fagin and the boys, illustration by George Cruikshank.
bottom: “Young Philip joins a School of Crossing Sweepers” — a scene from Dickens' London.

Bartlett's Creations

Katie Rasor interviews director Neill Bartlett



In anticipation of the American premiere of **Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist**, ARTicles interviewed Neil Bartlett, the creator and director of the piece. Mr. Bartlett has had a long, distinguished career as actor, director, adaptor and novelist. This will be his second production at the American Repertory Theatre.

Katie Rasor: What appeals to you about **Oliver Twist**?

Neil Bartlett: I defy anyone to show me a boring page written by Charles Dickens. His works get inside your head, and you never forget them. Two things make him absolute gold onstage: First, the story. Second the way he handles words. He writes some of the most inventive, astonishing, strange, alive sentences in English. At times they're simple. What is it about, “Please, Sir, I want some more.” that makes it one of the most famous lines in English literature?

So **Oliver Twist** is a story I've been promising myself I would stage for a long time.

KR: What challenges did you face adapting this piece?

NB: You have to honor the original, but you also have to reinvent it. **Oliver Twist** is a story lots of people love. You've got two jobs: You've got to satisfy people so they feel we have done justice to the original, but you've also got to make it your own. And you've got to push people's expectations. It mustn't be comfortable. You shouldn't be watching and thinking “Ah, this is lovely.” It shouldn't be reassuring and familiar. Dickens' work is frightening and exciting. I hope to bring this side to life.

KR: Could you tell us about the set design?

NB: Oliver Twist is a thriller that moves at an incredible pace. So the design has to move quick-

ly. Dickens goes from one place to another by just turning the page. We needed to go with a design that would never stop providing all the different locations: the orphanage, London Bridge at midnight, the den where Fagin lives. Rae Smith has constructed something that is half way between a set and a machine. It's a giant box of tricks.

KR: How did you and Rae Smith come up with the concept?

NB: It was inspired by a visit to Madame Tussaud's wax museum. They have a collection of what used to be called “Penny Dreadful Machines.” They are little, mechanical glass-fronted boxes, and inside the box there is a room in a castle or house. You drop a penny in the slot, which activates a clockwork mechanism, and little figures pop up and act out a story. Rae has taken one of those children's toys and blown it up into a giant box for the theater. The storytelling has as much to do with the design as the words.

KR: I understand that Victorian Music halls influenced you. How?

NB: One of Dickens' characteristic tricks is moving along at a clip and then suddenly pulling back and delivering some great moralizing paragraph. He was famous as an orator about social injustice, and one of the problems with turning a novel into a play is that you keep the dialogue but lose Dickens talking to his readers. So we've taken

those passages of prose and set them to tunes from the Music Hall of the period. Choruses sing the Dickens and punctuate the action. The song share Dickens' comments on what he felt about the events of the story. It's not a musical, but it has sung choruses. It's very different from the Lionel Bart musical.

KR: What are other ways that you tried to preserve the essence of the novel?

NB: All the words in the production are by Dickens. The show is called **Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist**. It really is his. The original language is so fantastic, why would you use anything else?

KR: What made you choose the Artful Dodger as a narrator?

NB: Since he's such a cheeky little sod, he can get very close to the audience.

KR: Does the novel have any contemporary resonance?

NB: Why is a novel written 160 years ago still in print? Because the question in the middle of the story is: Have we made a world in which children are safe? And everyone knows the answer to that question. The story is still true.

Katie Rasor is a first-year dramaturgy student at the A.R.T./MXAT Institute for Advanced Theatre Training

Merry Music in Dickens' London

by Njal Mjoes



throughout the performance. Presiding at one side of the platform, the Chairman introduced a variety of musical numbers: cheerful tunes, “nigger minstrels,” and selections from popular operas. An immediate hit, Morton soon renovated the venue into an ornate hall seating 1,500 spectators.

Inspired by this success, numerous music halls sprouted all over the city. By 1875, 375 music halls dotted Greater London. Although at first wild audiences and carousing dominated the performances, with the building of large “variety” theatres — the Alhambra, the Empire, the Tivoli — a wider audience started to attend, including members of *le beau monde*.

As the music hall’s popularity thrived, entertainment prevailed over drinking. Singing was the heart of the music hall, but other kinds of performances added variety: sword swallowers and slapstick sketches, aerialists and adagio dancers, magicians and male impersonators.

The demand for performers created a star system — the most successful artists performed in numerous halls each night, crossing London in carriages. Since they came from the working class, their songs and comedy acts reflected the social conditions and everyday life of the urban poor. The lyrics ridiculed lodgers and mothers-in-law, drink debts and overdue rent, bailiffs and hen-pecked husbands. One or two “hits” could make a name, and before the phonograph and radio, the audience would return to the music halls again and again to hear their favorite tunes. Soon these songs were whistled by the tailor, hummed by the butcher and chanted by the whore — building a merry soundtrack to the bustle of London.

Given the importance of music hall in Victorian England, Neil Bartlett has woven it into his production of *Oliver Twist*. In collaboration with composer Gerard McBurney and music director Simon Deacon, Bartlett will integrate live musicians onstage and intersperse the narrative with choral passages. The criminal hordes in the streets play folk instruments: the violin, the serpent and the

detestably out of tune, but exactly resembling in tone that of a great hungry, or rather angry Essex calf.” In *Oliver Twist* these instruments will bring the sounds of Dickens’s England back to life.

Alleviating the backbreaking toil of working class life, music filled Victorian London. Out of the brightly lit music halls, merry tunes reverberated in the dark city, piercing the fog, piercing the hearts of its people.

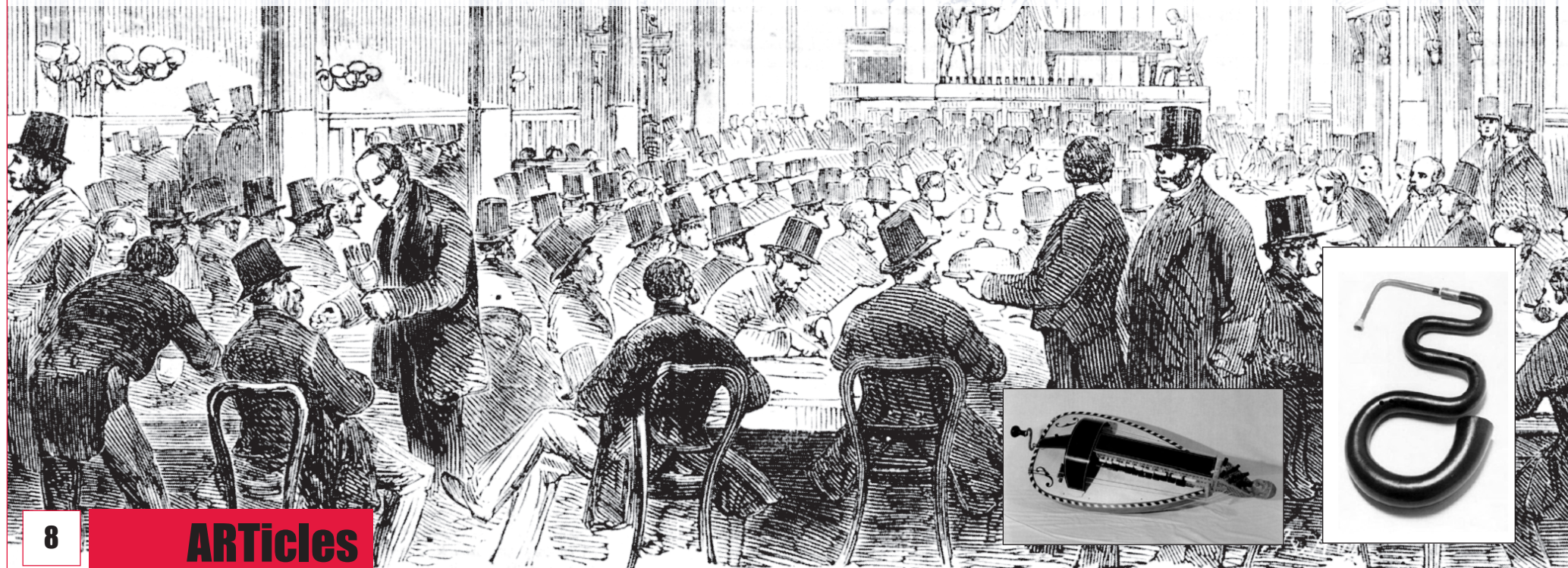
Njal Mjoes is a first-year dramaturgy student at the A.R.T./MXAT Institute for Advanced Theatre Training.

far left: program from the Empire Palace Music Hall, (c. 1897). near left: The Canterbury, London’s first purpose-built music hall. below: “My Last Pantomime — When I Took my Grandchildren to Covent Garden”, by F. Bernard. background and bottom: Covent Garden music hall bottom right insets: right: a serpent, left: a hurdy-gurdy



hurdy-gurdy. Although rarely seen today, the latter two were popular at the time of Dickens.

The hurdy-gurdy, a “mechanical violin,” is arranged with several strings to be played simultaneously by a rotating, rosin-covered wheel, thus creating a continuous, grinding tonality reminiscent of a bagpipe. The serpent, an ancient wind instrument related to the tuba, derives its name from its curving shape — the seven-foot long, sinuous conical tube resembles a giant, coiling snake. Played softly it has a firm, mellow timbre, at medium volume it produces a robust sound that becomes unpleasant noise when played loudly. Thus the instrument achieved a two-fold reputation. Composer Charles Burney described it as “not only overblown and



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OPENING NIGHT OF WINGS OF DESIRE

Opening night of **Wings of Desire** brought artists and supporters together at the Loeb Drama Center for pre-performance and post-performance receptions. Audience members, dignitaries, actors and artists celebrated the collaborative work of the American Repertory Theatre and Toneelgroep Amsterdam. Photos by Karen Snyder.



Wings of Desire cast members Mam Smith and Robin Young.



A.R.T. Advisory Board Member Dean Michael Shinagel with Professor Stanley Hoffmann.



The artistic team (L to R): Ko van den Bosch; A.R.T. Artistic Director, Robert Woodruff; Director Ola Mafaalani, A.R.T. Associate Artistic Director Gideon Lester; and Ivo van Hove, General Director of Toneelgroep Amsterdam.



(L to R): Jeanne Wikler, Director General for Cultural Affairs USA (Consulate General of the Netherlands); Cees de Bever, Director for Performing Arts (Consulate General of the Netherlands); and Harvard Loeb Fellow, Tracy Metz.



(L to R): Major Production Sponsor Ted Wendell; A.R.T. Artistic Director Robert Woodruff; Production Sponsors Martha Cox and Andrew McKay.



(L to R): A.R.T. Advisory Board Member Barbara Lemperly Grant with guests Lynne Kortenhaus, Rosalie Giordano, and Rajiv Bhatt.

Learning Opportunities at the American Repertory Theatre

By: Ari Barbanell

I spent five years before grad school in the art world of New York City, starting my own theatre company, interning with the renowned Wooster Group, and working amongst great artists such as lighting designer Jennifer Tipton and director Richard Schechner. All of this preceded my current study in Boston University's Arts Administration masters program, where there is a requirement to hold an internship for one semester — 150 hours of work — in an arts organization of my choice. At first I chose to waive my internship requirement, seeing it as something unnecessary to my growth in the field of theatre administration. However, an assignment for a class on management in performing arts organizations led me to the office of A.R.T.'s Development Director Sharyn Bahn. And everything changed.



The A.R.T. is a theatre I admired, even before my arrival in Cambridge, as an example of innovative and powerful theatre, making work that challenges the audience visually, emotionally and even aurally (hello Dresden Dolls!). I always held respect and admiration for this theatre. When I met Sharyn, and began to hear of the inner workings of the development team, I wanted more than just the pleasure of sitting in the audience. I hemmed and hawed and sent thank you notes, and finally I called to ask, "How can I help? How can I be an active part of this organization?" Sharyn made me aware of the A.R.T.'s active interning program. Each department accepts interns, on a seasonal or yearly basis. Interns must apply, and are chosen to be a part of the A.R.T. in a significant capacity. I could not have sent my resume sooner, and here, six months later, I continue to intern for the development department. I joke to the development team that I will head back to the offices of the arts administration program at Boston University with a proposal to teach my own class, entitled, "How Development Really Works." I am given respect and responsibility. I am able to attend staff meetings, aid in writing proposals, and work with the pARTy committee. When I stamp and seal envelopes, the entire department is stamping and sealing envelopes together. I learn, first-hand how much hard work, passion, devotion, time, and energy goes to the development process in theatre. The other interns at the A.R.T. will most definitely agree that the departments that they work in offer the same outlets for passion and devotion, the same lessons on how much work it takes to make a theatre function. We all pass each other in the hallway, smile and nod, and feel grateful to be a part of the A.R.T.

Ari Barbanell is an intern in the A.R.T.'s development office this season.

Transforming American Repertory Theatre Through Your Support



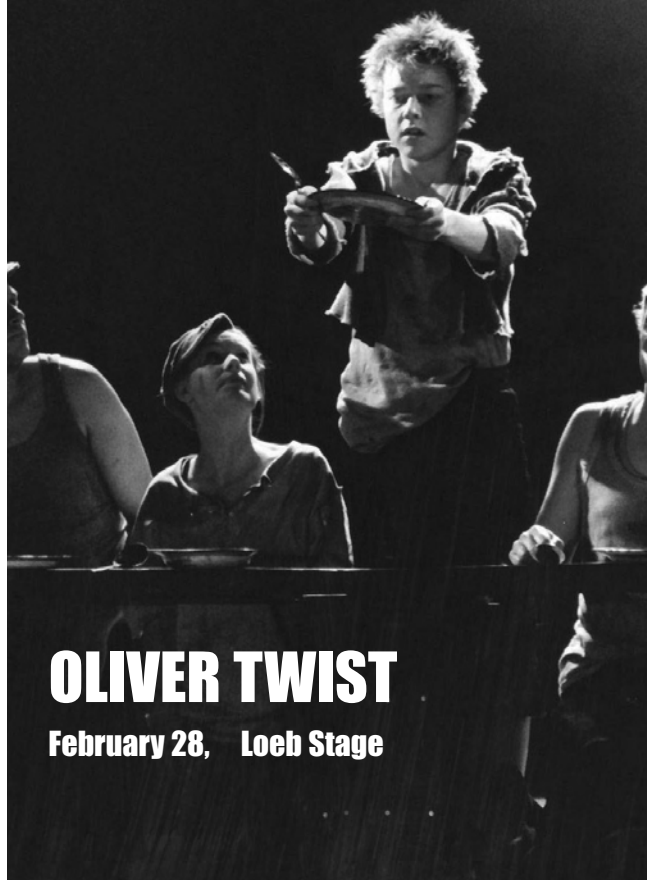
The Onion Cellar
Photo: Sheri Hausey

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The next Breakfast at the A.R.T.



OLIVER TWIST
February 28, Loeb Stage

BREAKFAST AT THE A.R.T.

Last season, the A.R.T. began a new tradition, inviting audiences to attend a weekday morning performance preceded by a continental breakfast and an opportunity to speak with members of the creative staff. The event committee — Sara Cabot, Barbara Desai, Rachael Goldfarb, Lenore Gustafson, and Yuriko Young — see **Breakfast at the A.R.T.** as an opportunity to welcome new and existing audiences to the theatre in a fresh new way. To date, **Breakfast at the A.R.T.** events have welcomed hundreds of people for performances of **Romeo & Juliet** and **bobrauschenbergamerica**.

On Wednesday, February 28, you're invited to the next **Breakfast at the A.R.T.** in conjunction with our American premiere of **Oliver Twist**. Join us for coffee, pastries, and conversation beginning at 9:00 a.m. in the West Lobby. At 9:30 a.m. A.R.T. Associate Artistic Director Gideon Lester will make some brief remarks about the production, then the audience will be ushered into the theatre for a 10:00 a.m. performance. For those who wish to remain following the performance, members of the cast will participate in a short discussion.

Tickets are \$30 in advance, \$35 at the door, and seating is general admission. To purchase tickets, visit www.amrep.org/breakfast or call the box office at (617) 547-8300. The breakfast is provided by Hi-Rise Bread Company.

Upcoming student matinees
10am

BRITANNICUS
February 7
OLIVER TWIST
MARCH 14, 16, 21, 23



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Britannicus February 7

Oliver Twist March 14, 16, 21, 23

breakfast at the A.R.T.

pre-performance discussion, light refreshments, and a performance, beginning at 9:00am. See page 11 for details.

Oliver Twist February 28

curtain times

Tue/Wed/Thu/Sun evenings — 7:30pm

Friday/Saturday evenings — 8:00pm

Saturday/Sunday matinees — 2:00pm

ticket prices

LOEB STAGE

	A	B
Fri/Sat evenings	\$76	\$53
All other perfs	\$66	\$38

box office hours

LOEB STAGE

Tuesday — Sunday noon — 5pm

Monday closed

Performance days open until curtain

preplay discussions

Preshow discussions one hour before 7:30 curtain led by the Literary Department. **Loeb Stage only.**

Britannicus preplays

Sunday, February 4, Wednesday, February 7,

Thursday, February 8

Oliver Twist

Wednesday, March 7, Thursday, March 8,

Sunday, March 11

playback

Post-show discussions after all Saturday matinees. All ticket holders welcome.

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january

						20
						britan
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
britan 2pm		britan	britan	britan	britan	britan ^P britan
28	29	30	31			
britan britan		britan	britan			

february

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march

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oliver 2pm		oliver	oliver SM oliver	oliver SM oliver	oliver	oliver ^P 2pm

britan **Britannicus** Loeb Stage
oliver **Oliver Twist** Loeb Stage

show^P post-show discussion

Pshow pre-show discussion, one hour before curtain

showSM student matinee, 10am
call 617-496-2000 x8844 to book a student group

show^B *Breakfast at the A.R.T.*, 9:30am
coffee, pastries & conversation, followed by performance

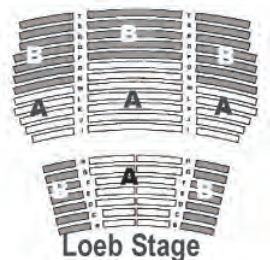
Curtain Times: (unless otherwise indicated)

Tue/Wed/Thu 7:30pm

Fri 8pm

Sat 2&8pm

Sun 2&7:30pm



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