

SHE STOOPS to CONQUER

By OLIVER GOLDSMITH
Directed by NICHOLAS MARTIN

OCTOBER 13 -
NOVEMBER 1, 2009

Emily Mann on *She Stoops to Conquer*



Dear Patrons,

I've loved *She Stoops to Conquer* for as long as I can remember. It is a classic, raucous and bawdy good time in the theater. In short, it is sheer high-style entertainment.

McCarter hasn't produced a restoration-style comedy since *The School for Scandal* in 2001. It has been far too long. Deliciously witty and at times delightfully implausible, *She Stoops to Conquer* is one of the finest comedies ever written, entertaining audiences since its first performance at Covent Garden in 1773.

I am particularly happy that this production will be directed by Nicholas Martin, one of our country's finest comedic directors. Possessing an extraordinary sense of style and a glorious sense of humor, Nicky invariably finds a way to manifest all of this on stage. As an actor himself (he earned his Equity card acting at McCarter in the 1960's!), Nicky knows the way into an actor's heart and soul. His effervescence is contagious, and a cadre of wonderful artists are constantly vying for their next opportunity to work with him. Nicholas Martin brings with him some of his favorite collaborators—actors and designers who have worked with him time and time again. They are the perfect team to tackle this glorious comedy.

I hope that *She Stoops to Conquer* transports you away from all your cares and concerns. Relax, let go and enjoy the ride!

Best Wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily Mann". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "E".

Oliver Goldsmith: A Biography

By Alexandra Ripp

Oliver Goldsmith was a paradoxical man: on the one hand, a perennial outcast who suffered misfortune throughout most of his life, on the other a sublime writer whose works would withstand the test of time. Born in Ireland between 1728-1731 (his exact birth year is unknown) into the large family of a country Rector, young Oliver was an unlikely future celebrity. He was notably homely, with a protruding mouth, short chin, and deep scars from the smallpox that afflicted him at age seven. His peers taunted his appearance, and his teachers dismissed him as unintelligent. Although he received a B.A. from Trinity College in 1749, he was not an outstanding student. After graduation, he was denied the taking of holy orders, ran out of money studying both law and medicine, served brief jail time, and journeyed aimlessly on foot through Europe with almost no money. When Goldsmith arrived in London in 1757, things only got worse. Thanks to his poor appearance, poverty, and unsophisticated speech, he was often jobless and hungry. Goldsmith's first thirty or so years of life completely belie the fame that he would later achieve.

Inspiration for *She Stoops to Conquer*

At age 17, Goldsmith was traveling in the Irish countryside, and when night came asked a passerby to recommend an inn. The passerby, who happened to be the town's joker, directed Goldsmith to the home of a squire. The squire played along with the prank, and only when Goldsmith left special instructions for his breakfast did his host reveal that the house was not an inn, but a private home.

Only when Goldsmith entered the literary world in 1757 did his life finally take a positive turn. He found low quality, poorly paid work, editing for the *Monthly Review* and proofreading for a printer. But after penning a successful translation and a series of articles between 1758 and 1759, Goldsmith quickly gained recognition, employment, and friendship with some of the foremost literary minds of his day. He produced, with equal skill, renowned novels, poetry, dramas, criticism, essays, biographies and histories.

Yet in genteel London high society, Goldsmith remained as scorned and ridiculed as he had been as a boy. A stammering, clumsy prankster, Goldsmith often willingly humiliated himself in public, and refused to change his rural manners or Irish brogue. However, his ability to remain independent in all respects allowed him to create art free of social restraints. His openness, imagination, self-mockery and scorn for affectation were noteworthy in the European intellectual sphere at this time.

With the production of *She Stoops to Conquer* in 1773, Oliver Goldsmith found himself at the peak of his fame—yet deeply depressed and in debt. By 1774, he was dead. Sadly, his own generation did not fully recognize Goldsmith's talents, and it was not until the mid-twentieth century that he began to receive the full scholarly and biographical analysis that he deserves.

Goldsmith and Georgian Comedy

Though *She Stoops to Conquer*, by Oliver Goldsmith, is often dubbed a “Restoration comedy” by publicists and reviewers, in fact, it opened in 1773—over a hundred years after Restoration of the monarchy in England, which occurred in 1660. The similarity between *She Stoops to Conquer* and Restoration comedies is no accident. With *She Stoops to Conquer* (and his essay on sentimental and laughing comedies), Goldsmith was, in fact, attempting to bring back Restoration-type “laughing comedies,” which had fallen out of favor as “sentimental comedies” had taken over the stage. Along with Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the author of two later comedies, *The School for Scandal* (1776) and *The Rivals* (1775), Goldsmith led a reaction against sentimentalism on the stage. The sentimental plays had arisen partly in response to the seeming immorality of Restoration comedies, which typically depicted a rakish, decidedly unvirtuous hero whose vices go unpunished. In contrast, sentimental comedies generally portrayed resistance to temptation and virtue’s final triumph.

In reacting against the trend of didactic and moralistic sentimental comedies, Goldsmith drew inspiration from his past. Goldsmith would have been very well steeped in the English drama that preceded him—during Goldsmith’s time, the repertory at the theater companies consisted of approximately 1/3 English Renaissance plays (such as Shakespeare, Jonson and Marlowe), 1/3 Restoration plays (such as Dryden, Wycherley, and Congreve), and 1/3 new plays by writers such as Goldsmith, Sheridan, and their contemporaries. Goldsmith and Sheridan drew upon their antecedents (particularly the Restoration comedies), writing comedies which mocked the social mores and behavior of the upper class. Their comedies emphasized wit, often took a somewhat critical view of romantic love, and generally prized nimble social skills and adept self-promotion over virtue and honest dealing. With *She Stoops to Conquer*, it is clear that Goldsmith cannot entirely leave the sentimental comedy behind (indeed, there are traces of it throughout the play). Nevertheless, his play marks a significant departure from the form, one which was not emulated by the playwrights who followed him—the plays written after Goldsmith’s time became even more sentimental, eventually developing into the form “Melodrama.”

(Adapted from McCarter Theatre’s *The School for Scandal* Audience Resource Guide)

An Essay on the Theatre; Or, A Comparison Between Sentimental and Laughing Comedy

by Oliver Goldsmith (1772)

This essay first appeared in Westminster Magazine. When She Stoops to Conquer was first produced, it was discussed as an example of the revival of laughing comedy over sentimental comedy, which dominated the English stage after the success of The Conscious Lovers, written by Sir Richard Steele in 1722.

The Theatre, like all other amusements, has its fashions and its prejudices, and when satiated with its excellence, mankind begin to mistake change for improvement. For some years tragedy was the reigning entertainment, but of late it has entirely given way to comedy, and our best efforts are now exerted in these lighter kinds of composition. The pompous train, the swelling phrase, and the unnatural rant, are displaced for that natural portrait of human folly and frailty, of which all are judges, because all have sat for the picture.

But as in describing nature it is presented with a double face, either of mirth or sadness, our modern writers find themselves at a loss which chiefly to copy from, and it is now debated, whether the exhibition of human distress is likely to afford the mind more entertainment than that of human absurdity?

Comedy is defined by Aristotle to be a picture of the frailties of the lower part of mankind, to distinguish it from tragedy, which is an exhibition of the misfortunes of the great. When comedy therefore ascends to produce the characters of princes or generals upon the stage, it is out of its walk, since low life and middle life are entirely its object. The principal question therefore is, whether in describing low or middle life, an exhibition of its follies be not preferable to a detail of its calamities? Or, in other words, which deserves the preference—the weeping sentimental comedy, so much in fashion at present, or the laughing and even low comedy, which seems to have been last exhibited by [Sir John] Vanbrugh and [Colley] Cibber.

If we apply to authorities, all the great masters in the dramatic art have but one opinion. Their rule is, that as tragedy displays the calamities of the great, so comedy should excite our laughter, by ridiculously exhibiting the follies of the lower part of mankind. Boileau, one of the best modern critics, asserts, that comedy will not admit of tragic distress:

*Le comique, ennemi des soupirs et des pleurs,
N'admet point dans ses vers de tragiques douleurs.*

[The comic muse, averse to tears and sighs,
From tragic sorrows with abhorrence flies. (Goldsmith's translation)]

Nor is this rule without the strongest foundation in nature, as the distresses of the mean by no means affect us so strongly as the calamities of the great. When tragedy exhibits to us some great man fallen from his height and struggling with want and adversity, we feel his situation in the same manner as we suppose he himself must feel, and our pity is increased in proportion to the height from which he fell. On the contrary, we do not so strongly sympathize with one born in humbler circumstances, and encountering accidental distress: so that while we melt for Belisarius, we scarcely give halfpence to the beggar who accosts us in the street. The one has our pity; the other our contempt. Distress, therefore, is the proper object of tragedy, since the great excite our pity by their fall, but not equally so of comedy, since the actors employed in it are originally so mean, that they sink but little by their fall.

Since the first origin of the stage, tragedy and comedy have run in distinct channels, and never till of late encroached upon the provinces of each other. **Terence**, who seems to have made the nearest approaches, always judiciously stops short before he comes to the downright pathetic; and yet he is even reproached by Caesar for wanting the *vis comica*. All the other comic writers of antiquity aim only at rendering folly or vice ridiculous, but never exalt their characters into buskin pomp, or make what Voltaire humorously calls "a tradesman's tragedy."

Yet notwithstanding the weight of authority, and the universal practice of former ages, a new species of dramatic composition has been introduced under the name of sentimental comedy, in which the virtues of private life are exhibited, rather than the vices exposed; and the distresses rather than the faults of mankind make our interest in the piece. These comedies have had of late great success, perhaps from their novelty, and also from their flattering every man in his favorite foible. In these plays almost all the characters are good, and exceedingly generous; they are lavish enough of their tin money on the stage, and though they want humor, have abundance of sentiment and feeling. If they happen to have faults or foibles, the spectator is taught not only to pardon, but to applaud them, in consideration of the goodness of their hearts; so that folly, instead of being ridiculed, is commended, and the comedy aims at touching our passions, without the power of being truly pathetic. In this manner we are likely to lose one great source of entertainment on the stage; for while the comic poet is invading the province of the tragic muse, he leaves her lovely sister quite neglected. Of this, however, he is no way solicitous, as he measures his fame by his profits.

But it will be said, that the theatre is formed to amuse mankind, and that it matters little, if this end be answered, by what means it is obtained. If mankind find delight in weeping at comedy, it would be cruel to abridge them in that or any other innocent pleasure. If those pieces are denied the name of comedies, yet call them by any other name, and if they are delightful, they are good. Their success, it will be said, is a mark of their merit, and it is only abridging our happiness to deny us an inlet to amusement.

These objections, however, are rather specious than solid. It is true, that amusement is a great object at a theatre; and it will be allowed, that these sentimental pieces do often amuse us; but the question is, whether the true comedy would not amuse us more? The question is, whether a

character supported throughout a piece, with its ridicule still attending, would not give us more delight than this species of bastard tragedy, which only is applauded because it is new.

A friend of mine who was sitting unmoved at one of the sentimental pieces, was asked how he could be so indifferent? "Why truly," says he, "as the hero is but a tradesman, it is indifferent to me whether he be turned out of his counting house on Fishstreet Hill, since he will still have enough left to open a shop in St. Giles'."

The other objection is as ill grounded: for though we should give these pieces another name, it will not mend their efficacy. It will continue a kind of mulish production, with all the defects of its opposite parents, and marked with sterility. If we are permitted to make comedy weep, we have an equal right to make tragedy laugh, and to set down in blank verse the jests and repartees of all the attendants in a funeral procession.

But there is one argument in favor of sentimental comedy which will keep it on the stage, in spite of all that can be said against it. It is of all others the most easily written. Those abilities that can hammer out a novel, are fully sufficient for the production of a sentimental comedy. It is only sufficient to raise the characters a little; to deck out the hero with a riband, or give the heroine a title; then to put an insipid dialogue, without character or humor, into their mouths, give them mighty good hearts, very fine clothes, furnish a new set of scenes, make a pathetic scene or two, with a sprinkling of tender melancholy conversation through the whole, and there is no doubt but all the ladies will cry, and all the gentlemen applaud.

Humor at present seems to be departing from the stage; and it will soon happen that our comic players will have nothing left for it but a fine coat and a song. It depends upon the audience, whether they will actually drive those poor merry creatures from the stage, or sit at a play as gloomy as at the tabernacle. It is not easy to recover an art when once lost; and it will be but a just punishment, that when, by our being too fastidious, we have banished humor from the stage, we should ourselves be deprived of the art of laughing.

Life and Art in Georgian England

rule in England—the same period when the American Revolution was fought. Britain was about to be transformed by the Industrial Revolution, and a rapidly growing network of roads and canals were connecting rural areas and allow the upper classes to travel more easily between their homes in the city and their estates in the country.

London at the time considered itself the center of the Western World; it was a city where both commerce and culture ruled. *She Stoops to Conquer* playwright Oliver Goldsmith was a member

of the Literary Club, formed by Dr. Samuel Johnson in 1763. Among other members were James Boswell, Johnson's biographer; Sir Joshua Reynolds, the painter; Adam Smith, the economist; Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the playwright; David Garrick, the actor; and Edmund Burke, the politician. Historian F.E. Halliday says, "It was the climax of the classical age in England, an elegant age that seemed to be so firmly established that there was no reason why it should ever end." Yet this age bore within itself the seeds of its own demise. There were great dichotomies: extreme wealth lived alongside severe poverty and manners and taste went hand in hand with vulgarity.

The world that Goldsmith and his contemporaries wrote about was a world with great mixing of socioeconomic classes. This democratization was reflected throughout the arts of the period as well. The cutting edge of artistic innovation moved away from the Court—where it had been during the Restoration—and toward the public. Popular styles began to be named not after monarchs but after craftsmen and designers—such as Sheraton, Heppelwhite, and Chippendale. The theater became more commercial than it had been during the Restoration and more frequented by a general public. Theaters themselves became much bigger—in 1777, the Drury Lane Theatre would have held about 2,300 patrons. This larger, more commercial theater responded to more popular tastes, which demanded "star" performances, such as those given by David Garrick (1716-1779), John Philip Kemble (1757-1823), and his sister, Sarah Siddons (1755-1831).

(Adapted from McCarter Theatre's *The School for Scandal* Audience Resource Guide)

Country Homes, Travel, and Inns

By Alexandra Ripp

COUNTRY HOMES

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the British "country home" was at the height of its popularity and importance. Families of the aristocracy possessed both a house in town and a house in the country, and would retire to the latter during weekends in order to relax and hunt. Some families even owned more than one country home.

Some of the minor gentry (such as the Hardcastles in *She Stoops to Conquer*) lived permanently in their country houses and did not frequent London. Members of this "country gentry" or "landed gentry," known as squires, owned less land than those of the aristocracy, but one squire's estate could still employ hundreds of people. However, as the rich grew richer in the prosperous

Georgian age, they began to buy up large swathes of land from the lesser gentry in order to increase their political power and elevate their social standing.

TRAVEL

Horse, coach, and walking were the major modes of transport in the first half of the eighteenth century. Coach travel was very slow, as the upkeep of roads was often neglected by the local parish or country authorities. Indeed, main thoroughfares aside, the condition of roads was universally deplorable and occasionally dangerous.

With the improvement of roads in the second half of the eighteenth century, the horse and buggy, became the primary mode of travel. Gentlemen of the Georgian era were required to have a strong interest in horses, which were a constant topic of conversation. The coach eventually came to manifest social standing, and coaches became increasingly showy as the age drew on.

Horse and buggy was the fastest and easiest mode of travel at the time. Navigating the Thames River was difficult and time-consuming, and canals, whose construction began in 1761, were better suited to move goods than people. The roads, however, presented a host of dangers for travelers, including robbery by highwaymen, the breakdown and flipping of buggies, the risk of floods, and the whims of unruly horses. One traveler recounts an accident he had: "...the Off Leader shies at a hen flying across the road, and before we had scarce time to think what was afoot, the Coach lurches, and then tumbles over into a ditch, the road being soft with mud at that point....The horses were in an awful Tangle, kicking and struggling..."

INNS

Inns existed in every corner of the nation for the convenience of the road traveler. Georgian gentleman Arthur Young noted: "In the remotest parts of the kingdoms a traveler will meet a reception, in most respects different from what he will find in foreign countries; a decent bed; clean sheets; plenty of fuel; wholesome provisions; and generally a civil landlord." As roads, coach quality, and travel conditions improved, so did inns, so that by 1827 some even resembled the homes of noblemen and served exquisite food.

Yet the quality of inns varied widely, and a traveler could not always expect such pleasant lodging. Most inns were mediocre establishments, sometimes dirty, inhospitable, and loud. The low quality inn, as described by traveler John Byng, never disappeared: "...the innkeepers are insolent, the hostlers are sulky, the chambermaids are pert, and the waiters are impertinent; the meat is tough, the wine is foul, the beer is hard, the sheets are wet, the linen is dirty, and the knives are never clean'd!!" Inns of poor quality generally existed in areas where industry flourished, such as Manchester. Byng attributes this to the fact that "the upstart man of riches

knows no better; the inns therefore are bad, dear, and presumptuous, but on roads where gentlemen travel, and scold, there will be a *reform*."

Marriage in Eighteenth-Century England

By Joshua A. Kashinsky

The plot of *She Stoops to Conquer* hinges on the possibilities and politics of two marriages. But what was marriage like in eighteenth-century England?

In the early eighteenth century, most members of the aristocracy and nobility had weddings that closely resemble formal weddings of today. A ceremony would take place in a church, the bride often wore white, friends and family would gather to celebrate, and the affair would cost a large sum of money. This was the case even though, prior to 1753, all that was necessary for a marriage to be considered legal was the mutual consent of both parties, assuming they were both "of age" (fourteen for boys, twelve for girls). Moreover, a man could promise to marry a woman at a future date, and then if they "consummated" their relationship, the couple could be considered legally bound. This loose definition of marriage led to many scandalous irregular marriages. The couple would not have a formal ceremony (often they would not have any witnesses at all), there would be no celebration, and it did not need to occur in a church.

By the mid eighteenth century, the trend of irregular marriages was on the rise, and this led to many legal and societal problems, the most common of which was marriages being contested. This most often occurred when a woman accused a man who was currently married to someone else of being previously married to her. Since these irregular marriages had no documentation and often no witnesses, they were very hard to prove. Often the evidence was hearsay and/or informal written correspondence between the couple. The ramifications of these legal challenges were significant, since women were often dependant on their husbands for income and property. If a relationship was not sanctified by society (via marriage), a woman could have trouble finding another spouse (because of her soiled reputation) and any children she had could be considered illegitimate and thus unable to claim any inheritance.

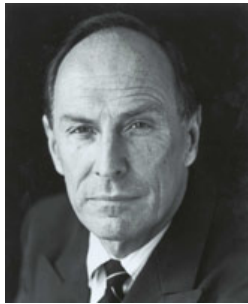
To counteract this trend, the Marriage Act of 1753 was passed as an attempt to codify the rules of marriage and create one universal standard. The Act required that witnesses be present, that the ceremony be performed by a legitimate and recognized clergy, that the names of the couple to be married be read aloud for three consecutive weeks at each of their home churches and that, if the couple was not twenty-one years of age, they have parental consent. The Act was intended to protect women (and sometimes men) from being deceived by potential suitors into compromising their reputation. Another intention behind the Act was to standardize the marriage records and thus minimize future legal disputes. However, the Act could also be viewed as an attempt by the nobility to maintain the status quo and preserve their place in society. The new restrictions on

marriage meant that an underage noble could not disobey his or her parent's marriage wishes without legally sacrificing his or her inheritance and/or title.

She Stoops to Conquer was written twenty years after the passage of The Marriage Act, and one can see the impact of the new law in the behavior of the characters in the play. Tony Lumpkin has to wait until he is twenty-one before he can refuse Constance Neville. The only hope for Constance and George Hastings to get married (without parental consent) is to leave England for France. Marlow and Kate Hardcastle are expected to go through an elaborate formal courtship, and Marlow's private comments and vows have no legal standing.

Who's Who

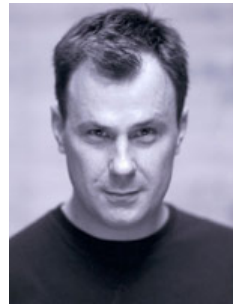
Cast (in order of appearance)



Mr. Hardcastle
Paxton Whitehead



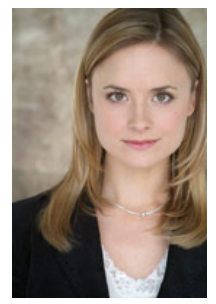
Mrs. Hardcastle
Kristine Nielsen



Tony Lumpkin
Brooks Ashmanskas



Kate Hardcastle
Jessica Stone



Constance Neville
Rebecca Brooksher



Stingo / Jeremy
Rich Dreher



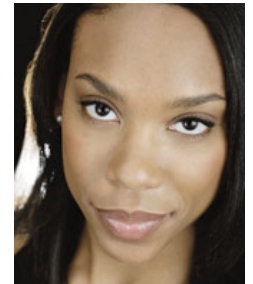
Charles Marlow
Jon Patrick Walker



George Hastings
Jeremy Webb



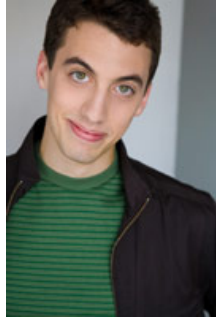
Diggory / Fellows
Brent Langdon



Pimple
Francesca Choy-Kee



Thomas / Fellows
Zackary Grady



Roger / Fellows
Adam Lerman



Sir Charles Marlow
John O'Creagh

Artistic Staff

written by...Oliver Goldsmith

directed by...Nicholas Martin

set design...David Korins

costume design...Gabriel Berry

lighting design...Ben Stanton

sound design...Drew Levy

dialect coach...Louis Colaianni

casting director...Laura Stanczyk, CSA

production stage manager...Stephen M. Kaus

stage manager...Lauren Kurinskas

artistic director/resident playwright...Emily Mann

managing director...Tim Shields

producing director...Mara Isaacs

director of production... David York

Character Profiles

Hardcastle—A retired British gentleman who owns a country home. He loves everything old—old friends, old times, old manners, old books, old wine, etc.

Mrs. Dorothy Hardcastle—Married to Hardcastle. She loves the modern fashions of London, although she's never been. She tries to keep atop of the latest styles, trends and gossip.

Tony Lumpkin—Son of Mrs. Hardcastle and stepson to Mr. Hardcastle. Spoiled by his mother, he likes to spend his time drinking, gambling and playing practical jokes. He is not yet of age, and so

does not have control of his inheritance.

Miss Kate Hardcastle—Daughter of Mr. Hardcastle. Her father has arranged for her to marry young Charles Marlow.

Miss Constance Neville—Niece of Mrs. Hardcastle and best friend of Kate Hardcastle.

Mr. Charles Marlow—A well-traveled young man who is overcome with shyness when speaking to women of his class, but is full of confidence when speaking to lower-class women.

Mr. George Hastings—Best friend of Charles Marlow. He is secretly engaged to Constance Neville.

Sir Charles Marlow (father)—Father of Charles Marlow and long-time friend of Mr. Hardcastle.

Interview with Nicholas Martin



A few weeks before rehearsals began, Producing Associate Adam Immerwahr sat down with Director Nicholas Martin to discuss She Stoops to Conquer. The current Artistic Director of Williamstown Theatre Festival, Martin's Broadway directing credits include Match, Butley, and Hedda Gabler. He received an Obie Award for his production of Betty's Summer Vacation.

AI: This is not the first time that you've been at McCarter—as an audience member or as an artist—can you talk about your history with the organization?

NM: I grew up near Princeton, quite near, a half hour away, in a town called Roosevelt, New Jersey—a Jewish kid of the 1940's. My parents took me to the theater and so I saw pretty much everything at McCarter for many years, fifteen years or so. There were memorable visits, the two of which I remember the best are Mae West in *Diamond Lil* and John Garfield, way past his prime, in *Golden Boy*. Some of the first work I did—in fact my first Equity job—was with the Association of Producing Artists repertory company at McCarter. I played Puck

in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, my mother's favorite performance of mine, and a lot of other good plays.

AI: *She Stoops to Conquer* was written in the 1770s, what is it about the play that speaks to us now?

NM: Well, it's one of the funniest plays ever written—that should speak to us today. It's a surprising play in—I don't like to use the term relevant, great plays are all relevant—in terms of the immediacy of its language. It has an energy— it's the energy of a writer and characters who are absurd in many ways, in *many ways*, but the writer is not afraid to show us his affection for them as well. It's what Chekhov did too, in another manner and with Russian temperament. A writer who's generous enough to give you foolish people, like we all are, and have a real affection for them is rare. Certainly rare today.

AI: What are the unique challenges of *She Stoops to Conquer*, and how will this production deal with those challenges?

NM: The challenge is in not making it in any way a historical relic, but at the same time being faithful to both the period (to a certain degree) and to the text. I like to *do* the play, I'm not an auteur. On the other hand, the great Charles Ludlam said: "Historical accuracy is not an entertainment value," and I take that at least half-seriously. The designers and I are paying attention to the confused identities of person and place within the play. That will be reflected in the clothes, in which we'll use modern fabric but in the silhouette of the period; in the set, which has remnants of the house, because that's an important figure of the play in all the scenes; and even in the performances. But I'm not a believer that there's such a thing as style; I believe that the language, the situation, and, frankly, the costumes provide the style. So I'm taking certain liberties with the period in this play—but none with the text.

Core Curriculum Standards

According to the NJ Department of Education, "experience with and knowledge of the arts is a vital part of a complete education." Our production of *She Stoops to Conquer* and the activities outlined in this guide are designed to enrich your students' education by addressing the following specific Core Curriculum Content Standards for Visual and Performing Arts:

- 1.1 (Aesthetics) All students will use aesthetic knowledge in the creation of and in response to dance, music, theater, and visual art.
- 1.2 (Creation and Performance) All students will utilize those skills, media, methods, and technologies appropriate to each art form in the creation, performance, and presentation of dance, music, theater, and visual art.

- 1.3 (Elements and Principles) All students will demonstrate an understanding of the elements and principles of dance, music, theater, and visual art.
- 1.4 (Critique) All students will develop, apply and reflect upon knowledge of the process of critique.
- 1.5 (History/Culture) All students will understand and analyze the role, development, and continuing influence of the arts in relation to world cultures, history, and society.

Viewing *She Stoops to Conquer* and then participating in the pre- and post-show discussions and activities suggested in this audience guide will also address the following Core Curriculum Content Standards in Language Arts Literacy:

- 3.1 (Reading) All students will understand and apply the knowledge of sounds, letters, and words in written English to become independent and fluent readers, and will read a variety of materials and texts with fluency and comprehension.
- 3.2 (Writing) All students will write in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes.
- 3.3 (Speaking) All students will speak in clear, concise, organized language that varies in content and form for different audiences and purposes.
- 3.4 (Listening) All students will listen actively to information from a variety of sources in a variety of situations.
- 3.5 (Viewing and media literacy) All students will access, view, evaluate, and respond to print, nonprint, and electronic texts and resources.

In addition, the production of *She Stoops to Conquer* as well as the audience guide activities will help to fulfill the following Social Studies Core Curriculum Standards:

- 6.1 (Social Studies Skills) All students will utilize historical thinking, problem solving, and research skills to maximize their understanding of civics, history, geography, and economics.
- 6.3 (World History) All students will demonstrate knowledge of world history in order to understand life and events in the past and how they relate to the present and the future.

Pre-Show Preparation, Questions for Discussion, and Activities

*Note to Educators: Use the following assignments, questions, and activities to introduce your students to *She Stoops to Conquer* and its intellectual and artistic origins, context, and themes, as well as to engage their imaginations and creativity before they see the production.*

1. **Exploring *She Stoops to Conquer*, Before the Performance.** The questions for discussion and activities immediately below are designed for both teachers able to incorporate the reading of Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* (available for free download online via Project Gutenberg) into their pre-performance curriculum (read Section A, then proceed to C), as well as for those whose students will not have the opportunity to read the entire play in advance of their experience of the performance (begin with Section B).
 - A. After reading *She Stoops to Conquer* either aloud as a class or individually, ask your students to brainstorm a list of themes central to the play. [See section B for a list of themes.].
 - B. Set on one night in and around the eighteenth-century English country home of the Hardcastle family, *She Stoops to Conquer* looks at the foibles, follies, and deceptions perpetrated by parents and their children, each trying get what they want out of the courtship and marriage game. At the center of the play is the young but sophisticated Kate Hardcastle who deceives a potential suitor, chosen by her father, with the intention of discovering his true nature; ultimately, she misleads him to win him. The play comically touches on the following themes/concepts: marriage and courtship; mistaken identity; how things appear to be versus how things are in reality; how falsehood can be used to reveal truth; culture clashes (e.g., country vs. city/urban, working class vs. middle class); generational conflicts (e.g., parent vs. child); and gender roles and the sexual double standard. Share these themes with your students.
 - C. Ask your students to recall and make connections to other plays or works of literature they have read or studied with themes similar to those of *She Stoops to Conquer*.
 - D. Share the various articles and interviews found in this audience resource guide with your students—preferably by reading them aloud as a class or in small groups—to provide an historical and creative context for *She Stoops to Conquer* in performance.
2. **"An Actor Prepares" a scene from *She Stoops to Conquer*.** To prepare their minds and ears to the joys and challenges of Oliver Goldsmith's particular brand of eighteenth-century comedy, have your students study **Act I, scene i of *She Stoops to Conquer*.**
 - o First share the Character Profiles, included in this Audience Resource Guide, with your students.

- Then, read the scene together as a class for comprehension (reading in the round, alternating lines, will give each student a chance to try out the speech and voices of different characters). Some words or phrases—especially those more familiar to an eighteenth-century reader—may need to be defined.
- Next, break your class up into scene-study partners. The scene (hyperlinked above) has been broken up into shorter “French” scenes 1-4. Student-actor pairs should be assigned a French scene and then decide who will play each character:

#1 Mrs. Hardcastle, Hardcastle

#2 Mrs. Hardcastle, Tony

#3 Hardcastle, Miss Hardcastle

#4 Miss Hardcastle, Miss Neville

- Scene-study partners should read their scene aloud once together before getting up to stage it, to get a sense of the characters and the scene overall.
- Student-actors should prepare/rehearse their scene for a script-in-hand performance for the class.
- Following scene performances, lead students in a discussion of their experience rehearsing and performing. Questions might include:
 - What are the pleasures and challenges of performing the scene from Goldsmith’s *She Stoops to Conquer*?
 - What insights, if any, did you have regarding the play or the characters did you get from putting the play and its characters on their feet?
 - What insights, if any, did you have regarding the play or the characters did you get from putting the play and its characters on their feet?
 - Was there any moment that felt strange or awkward in bringing your character to life?
 - Given your interaction with the Act I, scene i of *She Stoops to Conquer*, do you have any thoughts about what might happen in the scenes that follow?

In Context: The World of Oliver Goldsmith and *She Stoops to Conquer*. To prepare your students for *She Stoops to Conquer* and to deepen their level of understanding of and appreciation for the life and times of Oliver Goldsmith, have them research, either in groups or individually, the following topics:

- Oliver Goldsmith
- *The Good-Natured Man*
- “An Essay on the Theatre; or, a Comparison Between Laughing Comedy and
- Late-eighteenth-century English Theater:
 - *The Vicar of Wakefield*
 - “The Deserted Village”
 - Popular plays
 - Actors

- o Goldsmith's "Sentimental Comedy"
 - Playhouses
 - Audiences
 - o Contemporaries:
 - Richard Brinsley Sheridan
 - Dr. Samuel Johnson
 - George Colman (the Elder)
 - George III
 - o Eighteenth-century Britain:
 - Family life
 - Courtship and marriage customs
 - Country life vs. city life
 - Inns
 - o The Marriage Act of 1753

Have students teach one another about their individual or group topics via oral and illustrated (i.e., posters or PowerPoint) reports. Following the presentations ask your students to reflect upon their research process and discoveries.

Post-Show Questions for Discussion and Activities

*Note to Educators: Use the following assignments, questions, and activities to have your students evaluate their experience attending the performance of *She Stoops to Conquer*, as well as to encourage their own imaginative and artistic projects through further exploration of the play in production. Consider that some of the pre-show activities might also enhance your students' experience following the performance.*

1. ***She Stoops to Conquer*: Performance Reflection and Discussion.** Following their attendance at the performance of *She Stoops to Conquer*, ask your students to reflect on the questions below. You might choose to have them answer each individually or you may divide students into groups for round-table discussions. Have them consider each question, record their answers and then share their responses with the rest of the class.

Questions to Ask Your Students About the Play in Production

- a. What was your overall reaction to *She Stoops to Conquer*? Did you find the production compelling? Stimulating? Intriguing? Challenging? Memorable? Confusing? Evocative? Unique? Delightful? Meaningful? Explain your reactions.
- b. Did experiencing the play heighten your awareness or understanding of the play's themes? [e.g., marriage and courtship; mistaken identity; how things appear to be versus how things are in reality; how falsehood can be used to reveal truth; culture clashes (e.g., country vs. city/urban, working class vs. middle class); generational conflicts (e.g., parent vs. child); and gender roles and the sexual double standard.] What themes were made even more apparent in production/performance? Explain your responses.

- c. Do you think that the pace and tempo of the production were effective and appropriate? Explain your opinion.

Questions to Ask Your Students About the Characters

- a. Did you personally identify with any of the characters in *She Stoops to Conquer*? Who? Why? If no, why not?
- b. What character did you find most interesting or engaging? Why were you intrigued or attracted to this particular character?
- c. What qualities were revealed by the action and speech of the characters? Explain your ideas.
- d. Did either character develop or undergo a transformation during the course of the play? Who? How? Why?
- e. In what ways did the characters reveal the themes of the play? Explain your responses.

Questions to Ask Your Students About the Style and Design of the Production

- a. Was there a moment in *She Stoops to Conquer* that was so compelling or intriguing that it remains with you in your mind's eye? Write a vivid description of that moment. As you write your description, pretend that you are writing about the moment for someone who was unable to experience the performance.
 - b. Did the style and design elements of the production enhance the performance? Did anything specifically stand out to you? Explain your reactions.
 - c. How did the production style and design reflect the themes of the play?
 - d. What mood or atmosphere did the lighting design establish or achieve? Explain your experience.
 - e. How did the music and sound design enhance your overall experience?
 - f. Did the design of the costumes and/or makeup serve to illuminate the characters, themes, and style of the play? How?
2. ***"...We have banished humor from the stage, we should ourselves be deprived of the art of laughing": Goldsmith on Eighteenth-Century Comedy.*** In 1772, Oliver Goldsmith penned "An Essay on the Theatre; or, A Comparison Between Laughing and Sentimental Comedy," which characterized and criticized the type of comedy that had become the most popular of his day: sentimental comedy. Read Goldsmith's short essay (included in this Audience Resource Guide) with your students in tandem with this excerpt from Richard Steele's sentimental comedy ***The Conscious Lovers***
- o Ask students to define the characteristics of what Goldsmith refers to as "weeping" sentimental comedy and to provide examples from the excerpt of Steele's *The Conscious Lovers*.
 - o Next, ask them to compare Steele's brand of comedy with their personal experience of Goldsmith's oppositional "laughing comedy." Has Goldsmith

succeeded in his quest to restoring humor to the stage? Did he “excite [their] laughter by ridiculously exhibiting the follies” of his characters? In what ways, if any, did his comedy fail to amuse them?

- Invite students to consider the nature of today’s popular comic forms (on stage, in film, and on television) and compare them to the natures of both laughing and sentimental comedy. What contemporary forms, comic or otherwise, remind you of these eighteenth-century precursors?
3. ***S/he Stoops...to Write a Review.*** Have your students take on the role of theater critic by writing a review of McCarter Theatre’s production of *She Stoops to Conquer*. A theater critic or reviewer is essentially a “professional audience member,” whose job is to provide reportage of a play’s production and performance through active and descriptive language for a target audience of readers (e.g., their peers, their community or those interested in the arts). Critics/reviewers analyze the theatrical event to provide a clearer understanding of the artistic ambitions and intentions of a play and its production; reviewers often ask themselves, “What is the playwright and this production attempting to do?” Finally, the critic offers personal judgment as to whether the artistic intentions of a production were achieved, effective and worthwhile. Things to consider before writing:
- Theater critics/reviewers should always back up their opinions with reasons, evidence and details.
 - The elements of production that can be discussed in a theatrical review are the play text or script (and its themes, plot, characters, etc.), scenic elements, costumes, lighting, sound, music, acting and direction (i.e., how all of these elements are put together). **[See the [HYPERLINK Theater Reviewer’s Checklist.](#)]**
 - Educators may want to provide their students with sample theater reviews from a variety of newspapers.
 - Encourage your students to submit their reviews to the school newspaper for publication.
 - Students may also post their reviews on McCarter’s web site by visiting **McCarter Blog**. Select “Citizen Responses” under “Categories” on the left side of the web page, and scroll down to the *She Stoops to Conquer* entry to post any reviews.
4. **Blog All about it!: *She Stoops to Conquer*.** McCarter is very interested in carrying on the conversation about *She Stoops to Conquer* with you and your students after you’ve left the theater. If you are interested in having them personally reflect upon their experience of the play in performance, but are not interested in the more formal assignment of review writing, have them instead post a post-show comment on the McCarter Theatre Blog. To access the blog, click on this link **McCarter Blog**, then select “Citizen Responses” under “Categories” on the left side of the web page, and scroll down to the *She Stoops to Conquer* entry to find a place to post an inquiry or comment. [For structured responses, consider the following prompt: What expectations did you bring with you to *She Stoops to*

Conquer and were your expectations met, not met, or exceeded by the performance?] See you on the blog!

Additional Resources

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A McCarter Theatre production | Venue: Matthews Theatre | AUDIENCE GUIDE STAFF: Editor for Literary Content: Adam Immerwahr | Editor for Education Content: Paula T. Alekson | WEB DESIGN: Dimple Parmar | Contributors: Carrie Hughes, Joshua A. Kashinsky and Alexandra Ripp.