Dear Educators,

Welcome to our production of *She Stoops to Conquer!* This fun, light-hearted play is a hilarious examination of the role that societal expectation plays in our lives, and what happens when people subvert that for a variety of reasons. Of course, as this play was written in the 18th Century, expectations were much more strict than they are today, but that only serves to exaggerate the comedic effects of not conforming! This play can be a great jumping-off point for a conversation with students about modern societal norms, or it it can be watched as a history piece that demonstrates the joyful nature of Restoration Comedy.

All spring, we are exploring plays about women who take their fates into their own hands. We hope you'll join us for more shows this year, from *She Stoops to Conquer* — featuring Kate, who disguises herself to put her future husband at ease; to *As You Like It* — featuring the irrepressible Rosalind in her quest to save herself and woo Orlando; to *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet* — featuring the iconic leading ladies of Lady Macbeth and Juliet, who take control of their lives, hoping to achieve greatness before their stories end in tragedy. For better or for worse, these classic stories put women in positions of influence as they try to steer their own fates.

Thank you for joining us, and enjoy the show!

Best,
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**2018–2019 Student Matinees**

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**Plot Synopsis**

Wealthy countryman Mr. Hardcastle arranges for his daughter Kate to meet Marlow, the son of his friend, a rich Londoner, hoping the pair will marry. Unfortunately, Marlow prefers lower-class women, finding them less intimidating than women of high society. On his first acquaintance with Kate, the latter realises she will have to pretend to be ‘common’ to get Marlow to woo her. Thus Kate ‘stoops to conquer,’ by posing as a maid, hoping to put Marlow at his ease so he falls for her. Marlow sets out for Mr. Hardcastle’s manor with a friend, George Hastings, an admirer of Miss Constance Neville, another young lady who lives with the Hardcastles. During the journey the two men get lost and stop at an alehouse, The Three Jolly Pigeons, for directions.

Tony Lumpkin, Kate’s step-brother and Constance’s cousin, comes across the two strangers at the alehouse and, realising their identity, plays a practical joke by telling them that they are a long way from their destination and will have to stay overnight at an inn. The “inn” he directs them to is in fact the home of the Hardcastles. When they arrive, the Hardcastles, who have been expecting them, go out of their way to make them welcome. Marlow and Hastings, believing themselves at an inn, behave extremely disdainfully towards their hosts. Hardcastle bears their unwitting insults with forbearance, because of his friendship with Marlow’s mother.

Kate learns of her suitor’s shyness from Constance and a servant tells her about Tony’s trick. She decides to masquerade as a serving-maid (changing her accent and garb) to get to know him. Marlow falls in love with her and plans to elope but, because she appears of a lower class, acts in a somewhat bawdy manner around her. All misunderstandings are resolved by the end, thanks to an appearance by Lady Marlow.

The main sub-plot concerns the secret romance between Constance and Hastings. Constance needs her jewels, an inheritance, guarded by Tony’s mother, Mrs. Hardcastle, who wants Constance to marry her son, in order to keep the jewels in the family. Tony despises the thought of marrying Constance — he prefers a barmaid at the alehouse — and agrees to steal the jewels from his mother’s safekeeping for Constance, so she can elope to France with Hastings. The play concludes with Kate’s plan succeeding, she and Marlow become engaged. Tony discovers his mother has lied about his being “of age” and thus entitled to his inheritance. He refuses to marry Constance, who is then eligible to receive her jewels and become engaged to Hastings, which she does.

*Adapted from Wikipedia*
At-a-Glance

Broads on the Boards
In 1660, women were allowed to act onstage in England for the first time. Iconic characters like Rosalind, Viola, and Juliet were no longer played by adolescent boys (as they had been during Shakespeare’s lifetime) and new plays gave professional actresses opportunities to shine and subvert. “Breech-roles” — female characters disguised as men — made up 25% of London productions during the Restoration and allowed women to embody the swagger and sexuality of the period’s male rakes.

Changing Times
*She Stoops to Conquer* came along as the Industrial Revolution brought huge changes to England. City life took center stage and the old country traditions were threatened. The play comically reflected all the upheaval people were experiencing both socially and economically.

A World of Contradictions
City vs. countryside, men vs. women, rich vs. poor. *She Stoops to Conquer* is filled polarities and Goldsmith uses them to create comic opposition.

A Chaotic Debut
Oliver Goldsmith scrapped his original title, *The Mistakes of a Night*, for *She Stoops to Conquer* just minutes before curtain on opening night (March 15, 1773). Meanwhile the actresses playing Kate and Mrs. Hardcastle quarreled over who would deliver the epilogue. Luckily, the play was a huge success. It is credited with saving English theatre from the dullness of Sentimental Comedies and remains one of the most produced English comedies.

Instant Classic
*She Stoops to Conquer* created a fundamental change in the theatrical repertory of the 18th century. It was an antidote to the insipid Sentimental Comedies of the time with its fresh witticisms and new view of what comedy could be. The play was so popular that it became fashionable to bring the script to read along at performances and shout the jokes with the actors on stage!

Truth Stranger Than Fiction
Legend has it that the play was inspired by true events. Goldsmith was tricked into thinking that a friend’s country home was local inn. He didn’t realize the error until he asked for the bill the next morning!
Biography of Oliver Goldsmith

Oliver Goldsmith was born to Anglo-Irish clergyman, the Rev. Charles Goldsmith, in Kilkenny West, County Westmeath, Ireland Nov 10, 1730. His complicated relationship with his mother eventually lead to their estrangement. He spent unhappy years in college, including being under the tutelage of Theaker Wilder, who was known to have savage temper and mistreatment of his pupils. Goldsmith was even expelled for rioting with other students, and eventually obtained a B.A. from Trinity College in 1749. It is said he planned to move to America to escape his troubles, but on the day he was supposed to cross the Atlantic, he missed the boat. He was given 50 pounds to study law, but lost the money gambling. He moved to Edinburgh in 1752 to study medicine. No medical degree was acquired, but the title of Dr. Goldsmith stuck with friends. He traveled through Europe on meagre funds and settled in London, penniless, in 1756.

His rise from obscurity to fame and society started with odd jobs, including an apothecary’s assistant, school usher, then on to translating, reviewing, and writing history and essays. His lively style, readability, and believable characters set him apart from other writers. The Citizen of the World, a series of his essays, was published in the journal The Public Ledger in 1762. He became well known for his poem “The Traveller,” in 1764, which was the first work to which he put his name. He then became regarded as a novelist for The Vicar of Wakefield in 1766, which Goldsmith had written in 1762. The play, She Stoops to Conquer, was written in 1773 and was an immediate success. While clearly taking inspiration from Restoration Comedies, Goldsmith’s mission was to render a more natural take on the comedy of his time, and to strike a decisive blow at the “genteel” or “sentimental” comedy of his contemporaries (Fort). She Stoops to Conquer has outlived almost all other English-language comedies from the early 18th to the late 19th century.

Goldsmith made a decent income writing, but his indulgent spending led to debt from time to time. His friends held him in high esteem as a writer, but as a man was “one of the oddest personalities of his time.” (Encyclopædia Britannica). He was a gambler, was unattractive with oddly proportioned features and pock-marked skin, and while his writing was fluent and graceful, the opposite could be said about his conversational skills.

Goldsmith ultimately developed kidney disease, and decided to forgo treatment. He died in the spring of 1774 at the age of 44.

Sources


"Oliver Goldsmith" FamousAuthors.org 6 September, 2012. https://www.famousauthors.org/oliver-goldsmith
Comedy of Manners

A “Comedy of Manners” is a genre describing plays that poke fun at social and behavior codes and manners of the time. The comedy is often found in whether or not a character upholds those societal standards, and what happens when there is conflict between behavior and social expectations. Characters navigate this conflict in a humorous way, all while maintaining elegant wit and repartee. Famous examples include The Country Wife (1675), The Way of the World (1700), She Stoops to Conquer (1773), and Importance of Being Earnest (1895).

In She Stoops to Conquer, Charles Marlow should be treating Mr. Hardcastle — friend of his mother’s, and his potential future father-in-law — with duty and respect, but because Marlow believes he is at an inn, he is rude and demanding. Additionally, Kate bucks polite society to impersonate a barmaid, in order to learn what Marlow is like when he’s not speaking to society women. Both of these examples show characters behaving not as they are expected, and lead to the main humorous situation in the play.

Restoration Comedy

Not too long after Shakespeare’s time, London theatres were shut down and demolished. For 18 years (1642–1660) during the Commonwealth of England, the Lord Protector, Oliver Cromwell, believed that all of England should behave under Puritan rules, and “pointless enjoyment” was unnecessary. Under this strict moral code, celebrations of all kinds, including Christmas, were banned, as well as sports, colorful dresses, and makeup.

In 1660, Charles II took the throne, after living in exile in France. Charles II enjoyed the theatre and culture of France, and upon his return to England, financially supported arts and culture. Upon regaining power, he licensed two theatre companies, the King’s Men and the Duke’s Men, who began producing plays at an astonishing rate — on tennis courts! (Remember: the theaters had been demolished and not yet rebuilt.)

After 18 years of Puritan laws, England burst forward in color and entertainment, and even introduced women on stage! This time was coined the Restoration Period. Breaking free of the strict regulations meant that plays often explored risqué themes. Gone were the plain black and white clothes of the puritans. Instead, clothing and costumes were colorful and full of lace, ribbons, ruffles, and bows, and periwigs became fashionable. It was such a celebratory time that famous tragedies, such as Romeo and Juliet, were re-written with happy endings!

If Puritanism is the fear that somewhere, somehow, someone is enjoying himself (as stated by H.L. Mencken), the Restoration period embodies the pursuit of all that was denied. These characters want things and are actively pursuing them — money, sex, gossip, and pleasure are driving forces. Characters are good-looking and well dressed and they know it! Stock characters of wits, fops, flirts, and country bumkins showed up in the more than 400 plays presented between 1660 and 1700.

Sources


Our Production

“It is a show that is about love and a show about figuring out who your are; it’s a show about generational change,” said director Makaela Pollock at first rehearsal. “I think it’s about gender. I think it’s about class. I think it’s about both fulfilling and bucking expectations.” To amplify these themes, Pollock and her design team have created a mashup world of contradictions that invigorates this 1770s comedy with elements of 1990s prep and counterculture, starting with music.

“Back then, pub songs sounded more like Mozart. That doesn’t seem very pubby to us,” Pollock reflected. Looking for a boisterous music of the people brought Pollock and composer Brendan Milburn to ska-punk — a fast-paced, horn heavy fusion of the Jamaican precursor to reggae and punk that went mainstream in the 1990s. Led by Tony Lumpkin, the ensemble band will play original songs on live instruments.

Set designer Julia Hayes Welch took inspiration from the Capitol Hill pub, Smith. The resulting design is part Jacobean hunting lodge and part hipster Man Cave, with plaid acting as a bridge between the classic and anachronistic — creating a single place that can serve as the alehouse, Hardcastle home, and garden.

Footlights on the set will be used by lighting designer Andrew D. Smith to amplify the story’s more ridiculous moments with vaudeville cartoonishness.

Costume designer Chelsea Cook balances class and gender contradictions with the addition of a city-country dynamic. “One of the first things that we started out was defining what is country and what is the city,” said Cook. In the country “there’s herringbone and tweeds and plaids and greens and golds — and then on the opposite side of that we have the city which are plaids and brocades with brighter colors.” The ensemble characters will move between class and gender fluidly, removing and adding pieces that identify them with different realms of the story.
Pre-Show Reflection

These questions will help students to think about some of the big ideas behind the play before watching it.

How can unspoken expectations lead to misunderstanding? Have you ever assumed you were expected to behave a certain way, only to find out that you were wrong?

Do you behave differently in different situations? Can you think of behaviors that are appropriate in one situation (e.g. at a football game) that would be inappropriate in another situation (e.g. at a fancy dinner)?

Students can discuss these in a small group, or write responses in a journal.

Can you think of a time you were in a funny or uncomfortable situation because someone mistook who you were? Some examples: someone thought you were older or younger than you really are, someone thought you were more or less skilled at something than you really are, etc.

Have you ever tried to present yourself as someone that you weren’t?

Post-Show Discussion

The following questions are to help lead a discussion with your class after seeing the play. For all of these, there are many possible answers and student responses will vary. Some possible responses are provided.

Are these characters sympathetic? Are we laughing at them because they’re ridiculous, or laughing with them because the situations they are in are humorous?

How do the expectations and societal norms cause the misunderstanding and drama of the play? Give at least two examples.

Are there moments in the play when clearer communication could have solved the conflict? How would this affect the comedy of the situation? How would this affect the happiness of the characters?

Why do you think Tony Lumpkin plays the trick on Marlow, convincing him that the Hardcastle home is just an inn? Why does Kate pretend to be a barmaid?

How does a character’s perceived class impact how their behavior is viewed?

• Mr. Hardcastle’s behavior is seen as absurd if he is an innkeeper, but reasonable if he is an upper class man.
• Kate is viewed several different ways by Marlow depending on whether she is acting as herself or a barmaid.
• Marlow feels he must behave in a certain way because he is a high-class man. However, when he is not in the presence of other high-class people, he can behave how he wants.

How important is social class during the 18th Century? What is the role of social class in marriage arrangements? (This may take some research.) How important is social class today? Does it play a role in marriage decisions?
Activity

Criticism of *She Stoops to Conquer*

In this activity, students will read historical and opposing criticisms of the play written 100 years apart. Then they will write their own short review of the play.

**Instructions**

1. Hang signs around the room that read “Strongly Agree,” “Somewhat Agree,” “Somewhat Disagree,” or “Strongly Disagree.”
2. After watching the play, read Horace Walpole’s review of the play aloud. Have students move to the sign that best describes how they feel about this review.
3. Give each of the groups that forms a couple minutes to discuss why they feel the way they do. Then have a spokesperson from each group present why they agree/disagree with the sentiment.
4. Repeat steps 2 & 3 for the Percy Fitzgerald review.
5. Finally, have students work in pairs to write their own 1-paragraph review of the play.

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**Dr. Goldsmith has written a Comedy—no, it is the lowest of all farces. It is not the subject I condemn, though very vulgar, but the execution. The drift tends to no moral, no edification of any kind. The situations, however, are well imagined, and make one laugh, in spite of the grossness of the dialogue, the forced witticisms, and total improbability of the whole plan and conduct. But what disgusts me most is, that though the characters are very low, and aim at a lower humour, not one of them says a sentence that is natural or marks any character at all. It is set up in opposition to sentimental comedy, and is as bad as the worst of them.**

*Horace Walpole, 1773*

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**That delightful comedy, *She Stoops to Conquer*, would indeed deserve a volume, and is the best specimen of what an English comedy should be. It illustrates excellently what has been said as to the necessity of the plot depending on the characters, rather than the character’s depending on the plot, as the fashion is at present ... What a play! Whenever tire of it. How rich in situations, each the substance of a whole play! At the very first sentence the stream of humour begins to flow.**

*Percy Fitzgerald, 1870*
SEATTLE SHAKESPEARE COMPANY

Mission Statement
With the plays of William Shakespeare at our core, Seattle Shakespeare Company engages our audiences, our artists and our community in the universal human experience inherent in classic drama through the vitality, immediacy and intimacy of live performance and dynamic outreach programs.

ABOUT US
Seattle Shakespeare Company is the Puget Sound region’s year-round, professional, classical theatre. The company’s growing success stems from a deep belief in the power and vibrancy of the time-tested words and ideas of Shakespeare and other classical playwrights along with a commitment to artistic excellence on stage. The results have been provocative performances that both challenge and delight audiences while fostering an appreciation for great stage works.

Our combined programs — which include indoor performances, free outdoor productions, regional tours, educator and youth programs — reach across barriers of income, geography, and education to bring classical theatre to Washington State.

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

In-School Residencies, Matinees, and Workshops
• In-School Residencies bring active, customized curriculum into schools across Washington State. Professional teaching artists plan with teachers to tailor each residency to fit the needs and objectives of the classroom. Seattle Shakespeare Company residencies inject vibrant, active exercises into lessons that unlock the text, themes, and actions of a Shakespeare play.

• Student Matinees bring over 3,000 students annually to our mainstage productions in the Seattle Center. Teachers are provided free study guides, and student groups are invited to stay after the show for a free Q&A session with the cast.

• Pre-show and post-show workshops can be booked to accompany mainstage matinees. These workshops include an introduction to the play itself, student activities, and insights into direction and design choices of our specific production.

Touring Productions
• Fresh and accessible 90-minute productions tour across Washington State each Spring, reaching more than 14,000 students and adults. These nimble productions perform as easily in school gymnasiums as professional theatre facilities. Teachers are provided free study guides and students enjoy free post-show Q&A sessions with the cast.

• Schools have the opportunity to book accompanying in-school residencies with touring productions, led by members of the touring cast and additional teaching artists.

Camps and Classes
• Our summer “Camp Bill” series in Seattle and Edmonds offers young actors a variety of camps to choose from or combine. Camps range from a One-Week Introduction to a Three-Week Production Intensive, with many options in between.

• In our Fall and Spring after-school “Short Shakes” programs, young actors develop their skills and gain hands-on performance and production experience.

• Seattle Shakespeare Company occasionally offers adult classes and workshops to our community featuring guest artists who work on our stage.

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