

Brigham Young University · Department of Theatre and Media Arts

Racine's Bérénice

Adapted by **Matthew Greene**

Directed by
Megan Sanborn Jones
Kymberly Mellen

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Racine's Bérénice

Adapted by Matthew Greene

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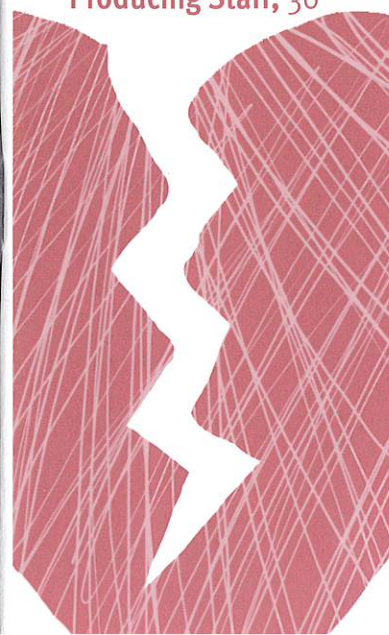
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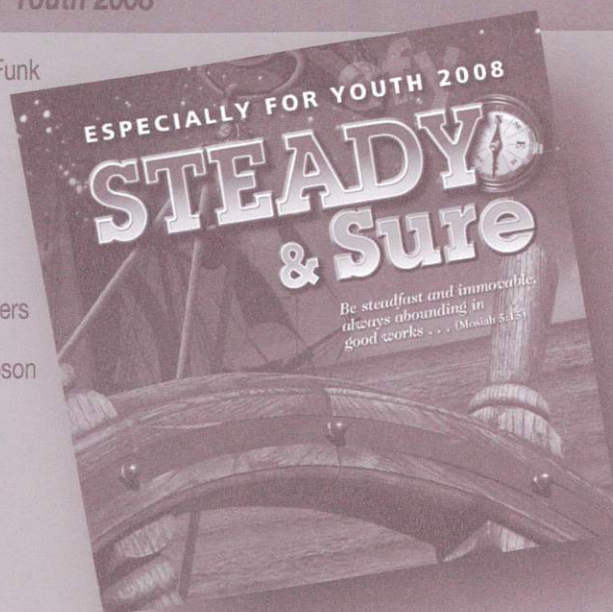
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Cast

Jean Racine

Titus

Bérénice

Cardinal Richelieu

Antiochus

Arbaces

Therese du Parc

Phenice

Matthew Greene

Gene Ledbetter

Stephanie Cleghorn

Patrick Newman

Kristopher Paries

Ashley McWhorter

BreAnne E. Folkman

Sarah-lucy Hill

Production Staff

Directors

Megan Sanborn Jones

Kymerly Mellen

Dramaturg

Sarah Amundsen

Production Stage Manager

Richie Uminski

Scenic Designer

Dick Merkling

Costume Designer

Mary Farahnakian

Sound Designer

Sarah Nasson

Makeup and Hair Designer

Melanie Kowallis

Lighting Designer

Christina Tibbetts

Assistant Scenic Designer

Adisti Regar

Assistant Costume Designers

Landon Gates

Chantel Matheson

Assistant Makeup and Hair Designer

Allison Dredge

Assistant Stage Managers

Dave Mortensen

Tiffany Smithee

Light Board Operator

Meagan Wright

Directors' Note

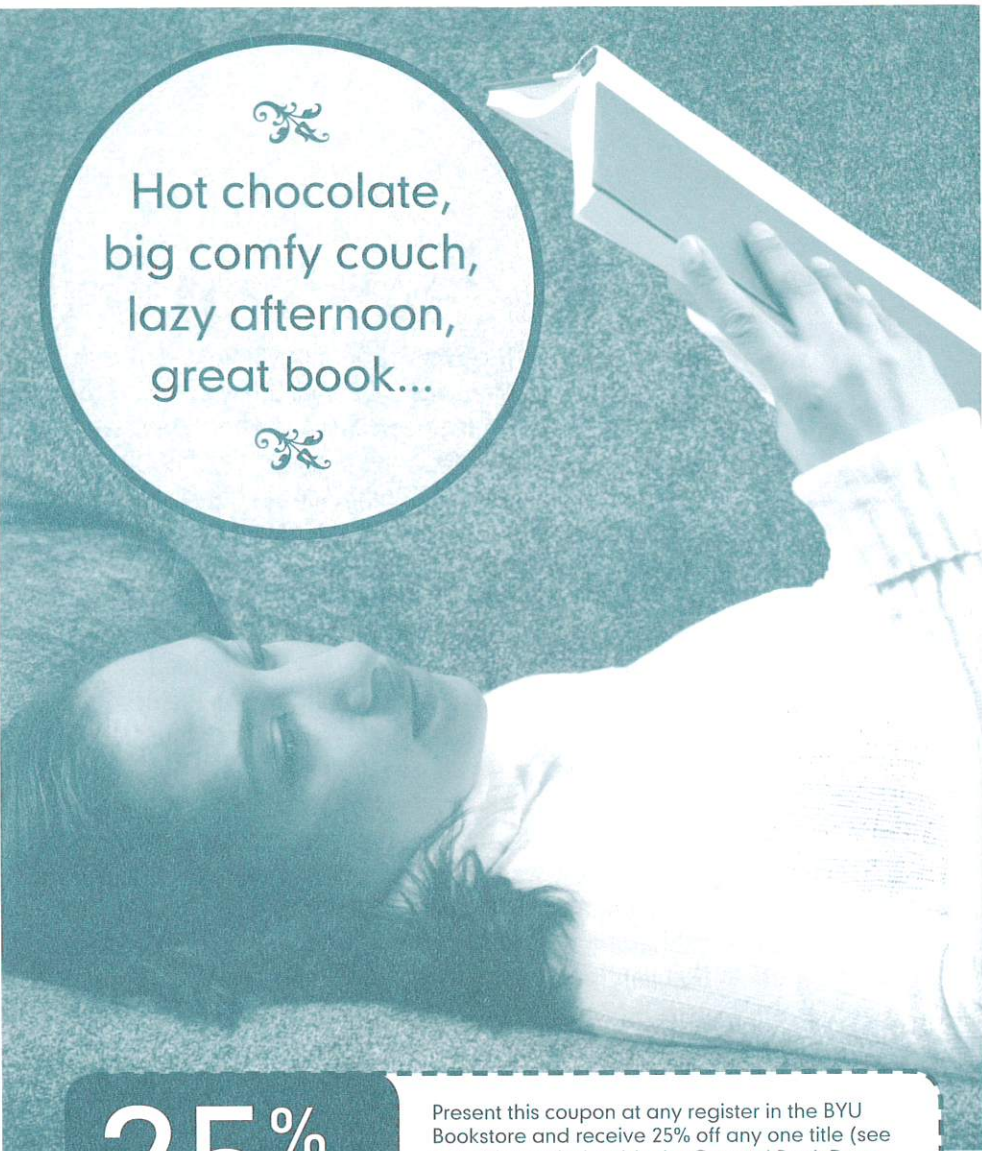
One cannot read the original text of *Bérénice* by Jean Racine without being simultaneously aware of two things. First, the play is remarkably simple. It proceeds in nearly real time, is set in a single room, and follows one narrow plot whose conflict is a decision that has already been made. Secondly and surprisingly, the simplicity is compelling, moving, and beautiful. The play feels out of place compared to contemporary works that focus on action or intricate plots or epic adventures. Readers might not think that such a narrowly focused story could hold an audience's attention. Racine was confident in his skills, however. Writing to his critics after the opening of the play, he points out that:

It is not merely that some people have reproached me with this same simplicity which I have sought so carefully: they have thought that a tragedy which was so little charged with intrigues could not be according to the rules of the theatre. I inquired if they complained that they had been bored. I was told that they all admitted that it had not bored them at all, that it had even moved them in several places, and that they would see it again with pleasure. What else do they want? (Preface to *Bérénice*, 1670).

It was this comment by Racine that was the inspiration for our new adaptation of *Bérénice*. We wondered at the contradiction and complexity of Racine—so confident in his personal life yet so sensitive in his writing. We questioned how someone who was clearly dismissive of criticism not only worked within the prescribed boundaries, but perfected the highly controlled form of French neoclassical drama. We were fascinated with

Racine's private life, which frequently intersected with his art in spectacular ways. We took these observations to the very talented Matthew Greene, who reconceived the original *Bérénice* from the perspective of Racine—a writer torn between many influences in his life and writing. The result is the production you are seeing tonight.

Bérénice is not performed nearly as often as Racine's *Phaedra*, which is considered his greatest masterpiece. It has never been performed in this adaptation before, so the play itself is a first. Additionally, this is the first time either of us have directed a play that we commissioned. The creative process started with our idea, which was researched by our dramaturg Sarah Amundsen and Matthew Greene, and eventually found shape in Greene's play. The play was then subject to group revisions by the entire team to arrive at its final version. This process was exhilarating and created an atmosphere of collaboration that continued throughout rehearsals. This collaboration was impacted by yet another first—neither of us have co-directed a play before. As two women with very strong and often opposing ways of approaching directing, working together was as challenging as it was rewarding. We encouraged our production team and our actors to bring their strong opinions to the process as well. The result was a vibrant and exciting environment that we realized mirrored Racine's writing process. In both Racine's play and in our production, we believe that multiple voices are better than one. We hope you agree.



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Productions entered on the Participating level are eligible for inclusion at the KCACTF regional festival and can also be considered for invitation to the KCACTF national festival at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC, in the spring of 2009.

Last year more than 1,300 productions were entered in the KCACTF involving more than 200,000 students nationwide. By entering this production, BYU Theatre and Media Arts is sharing in the KCACTF goals to recognize, reward, and celebrate the exemplary work produced in college and university theaters across the nation.

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Meet the Company

Stephanie Cleghorn Bérénice

From Saginaw, Texas. Stephanie is in the BFA acting program. Recent credits include Tituba in Springville Playhouse's *The Crucible*, Aunt in *Bread of Affliction*, Ramona in BYU's production of *Esperanza Rising*, Anna in *Drums in the Night*, and Jocasta in *Oedipus Tyrannus*. Stephanie was a recent Irene Ryan nominee and invited to attend the American College Theater Festival.

BreAnne E. Folkman Therese du Parc

From Orem, Utah. Senior in the music dance theatre program. She recently returned from LDS mission in Omaha, Nebraska. Last seen at BYU in *The Foreigner* as Betty (Irene Ryan Nomination). Recent credits include Belle in *Beauty and the Beast*, Rita in *Lucky Stiff*, Amneris in *Aida*, Laury in *Oklahoma!*, and title role in *Jane Eyre*.

Matthew Greene Playwright/Racine

From Sacramento, California. Senior in theatre arts studies with an emphasis in playwriting and directing. His plays have been produced by BYU's Experimental Theatre Company, New Play Project, Plan B, Theatre Arts Conservatory, and at the American College Theatre Festival (National semi-finalist in the Ten-Minute Play Competition). Acting credits include Balicke in *Drums in the Night*, Matt in *The Fantasticks*, and Adam/Noah in *Children of Eden*.

Sarah-lucy Hill Phenice

From Sacramento, California. Pre-acting major. Recent credits include Mariah in BYU Young Company's *Twelfth Night*.

Gene Ledbetter Titus

From Provo, Utah. Junior in the BFA acting program with a minor in Japanese. Recent credits include Caius in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* with the Actor's Repertory Theatre Ensemble, Krojack in *Don't Drink the Water* at Hale Center Theatre, Sir Toby Belch in *Twelfth Night* with the BYU Young Company Shakespeare Troupe, Clive in *Season's Greetings* with the BYU Acting Conservatory, and Shamraev in *The Seagull* at BYU.

Ashley McWhorter Arbaces

From Lewiston, Maine. Sophomore in pre-acting. Recent credits include Queen Aggravain in *Once upon a Mattress* and Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Patrick Newman Cardinal Richelieu

From Tallahassee, Florida. Junior in theatre arts studies with an associate degree from Florida State University. Recent credits include General Bristow in a murder mystery at BYU, and Frederick in *The Pirates of Penzance* at Chiles High School. This is Patrick's first BYU mainstage production.

Kristopher Paries Antiochus

From Huntsville, Alabama. Freshman with an open major. Past credits include Buddy in *The Diviners*, a BYU Mask Club production; John in *tick...Tick...BOOM!* at Everest Theatre Productions; and ensemble in *Grease* at Fantasy Playhouse.

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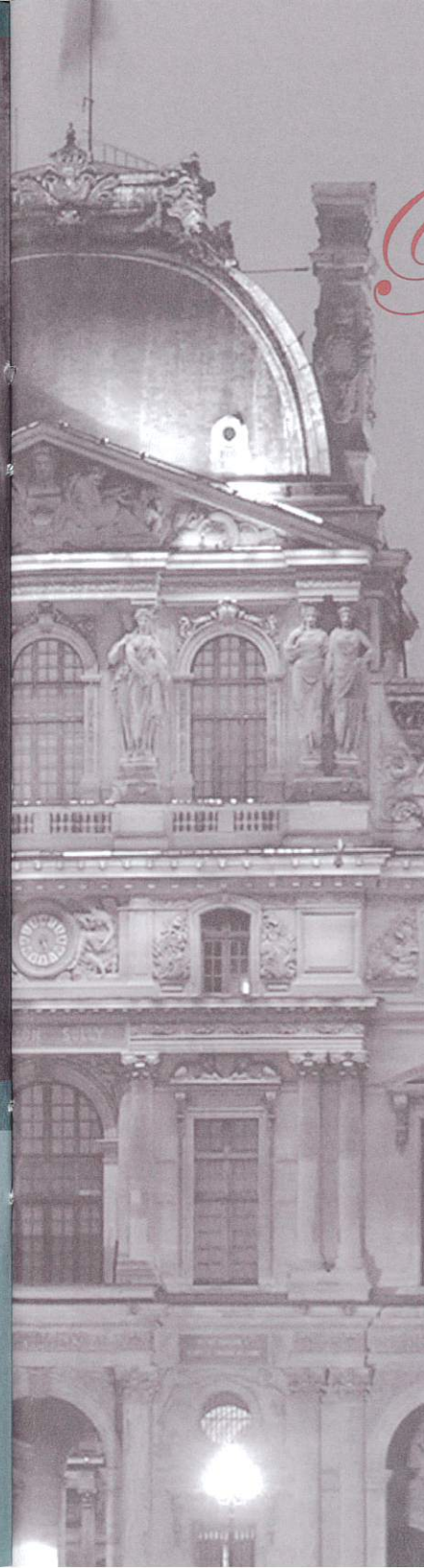
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Bérénice Study Guide

By Sarah A. Amundsen
Dramaturg

Dramaturg's Note

Does unrequited love require a tragic death to validate its strength, power and endurance? It seems that love and tragedy often go hand in hand. I grew up learning of the great love stories of history and literature, and I came to empathize with lonely lovers and long to see everything work out for them in the end. In these timeless stories, when it seems like one of these fantastical exploits is about to go awry we rail against the fate, impatience, or pride that threatens to separate two souls who seem so patently right for each other. And don't we all rejoice when those misunderstandings are thrust aside in the name of love and a new union is achieved? And don't we so grieve when that resolution comes just a bit too late—when the poison has been drunk, when the carriage has driven away forever, when a young life is ended in grief? Such is the case with love—it seems it is either requited happily, or doomed by the early demise of one of those involved.

Such is not the case with this production! Following traditional French neoclassical guidelines, Jean Racine has created what seemed to be the impossible—a bloodless tragedy. This play seems to take the traditional path—a pair of lovers who cannot with honor be together. Historically, in this situation, one or the other or both of them would have to die in order to show just how much they meant to each other, but Racine chooses a more realistic and mature path for his characters—they agree to live without each other, mend their broken hearts, and go on with their lives.

Does this mean that they don't truly love each other? That they are not as devoted as they claim? Or is this more honest and realistic theatre? Does someone really have to die to make these feelings and emotions valid and real? I suppose these answers could be debated from many different directions, but for now, I will leave that for you the viewer to consider. Who is right, and what is love? Perhaps that is all in the eye of you, the beholder.

French Academy & Neoclassical Rules

The French Academy was started in 1629 as a literary discussion group of the leading writers of the time. Shortly thereafter, it was commandeered by Cardinal Richelieu who wanted to improve the state of French theatre. He thought that this group would be ideal to enforce certain rules intended advance the quality of not only theatre, but writing and language as well. To this end, the neoclassical rules were developed—these became the formula that all theatre must conform to in order to be accepted by the Academy. These rules, modeled after Aristotle, included the following:

Decorum—characters must behave in a manner appropriate to their age, station, sex, etc.

Verisimilitude—“true to life.” magical or supernatural events were not acceptable.

Unities—time, place, and action. This means that the action must take place within 24 hours, be in one location, and focus on one plot with no subplots.

Genre—tragedy and comedy don’t mix.

Cardinal Richelieu

Born in 1586 into a middle class family, Cardinal Richelieu, before his death in 1642 became one of the most powerful, feared, and respected men in France. He reached the peak of his power during the reign of Louis XIII, who was a child when he became the king of France. Richelieu was able to guide the young monarch to fulfill Richelieu’s aims of making France the leading cultural leader of Europe. He has often been portrayed as an evil, manipulative, lecherous, power-hungry fiend, but this reputation is in large part unfounded. Power-hungry and manipulative he may have been, but there is no evidence that he was unfaithful to the vows of chastity that he made when he entered the priesthood of the Catholic Church.



Jean Racine

Racine was born in 1639 and was orphaned four years later. He first lived with his grandparents, but shortly after came into the custody of his aunt who lived in a convent. Growing up in a convent, he had a very strict religious upbringing and education. However, he finished his education in Paris where he became a lawyer and discovered his love of writing.

As Racine’s popularity grew, he was in direct competition with another playwright—Pierre Corneille, who, though very popular, had trouble conforming to the rules of the French Academy. Racine set himself against Corneille and was determined to best him as the preeminent playwright of France. With his play *Bérénice* he accomplished his goal.

When Racine’s *Bérénice* premiered, Corneille’s play *Titus and Bérénice* was opening just down the street, but Racine’s production was the successful production. With this triumph, Racine was considered to be the most perfect example of a neoclassical Playwright.

Therese du Parc

Little is known about Therese du Parc, which creates an air of mystery about her character here. She was born circa 1633 and began her career as a dancer in a country troupe. She later became a part of Molière’s troupe where she met Racine who had written his first two plays for them. After his second play Therese left with Racine to work for another troupe and became his mistress. She died suddenly December 11, 1668, and several years later Racine was accused of her murder. He was never charged as there was no evidence to support the allegations made by her stepmother and daughters.



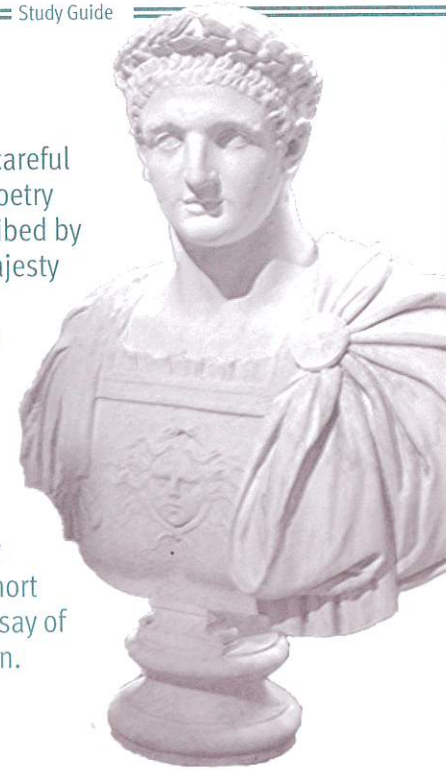
Berenice of Cilicia

Born circa AD 28, the Palestinian princess Berenice was a remarkable woman. Mentioned in the Bible in the Book of Acts, she was married three times before meeting Titus and falling in love with him. By her own rights she was powerful, wealthy, and an experienced politician. She travelled to Rome to be with Titus in AD 75 and left four years later in AD 79 upon his ascension to the title of Emperor. After Titus' death in AD 81, she drops out of written history and is never heard of again.



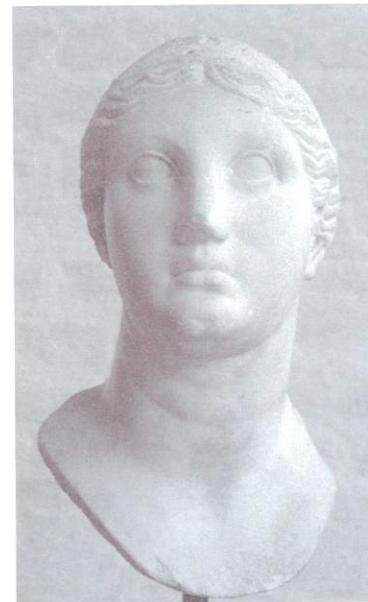
Titus Flavius Vespasianus

Titus was born in AD 39 and received a very careful Roman education that included music and poetry as well as traditional subjects. He was described by Suetonius as having an “equal mixture of majesty and grace; was very strong, though not tall, and somewhat corpulent.” He continued the work his father Vespasian started on the Colosseum, though he didn’t live to see its completion either. His life was fraught with danger—his own brother Domitian regularly plotted to overthrow him or have him killed. Regardless of this disloyalty, he never punished him for his misdeeds. He died a short two years after Berenice’s departure—some say of a broken heart, others of his brother’s poison.



Antiochus IV of Commagene

While Antiochus plays a major part of the dramatic action of Racine’s play, in reality he may never have even met Titus. He was born sometime before AD 17 which is when his father died. Due to his youth, he and his sister were sent to Rome to be raised until AD 38 when the Emperor Caligula returned his paternal throne to him—the kingdom of Commagene in what was ancient Armenia—now. Historically the only traffic he and Titus had was in AD 70 when Titus was laying siege to Jerusalem and Antiochus sent troops commanded by his son to assist the would-be emperor. In AD 72 he was deposed and after this time there is no historical record of the man that Racine was able to create so vividly on stage.



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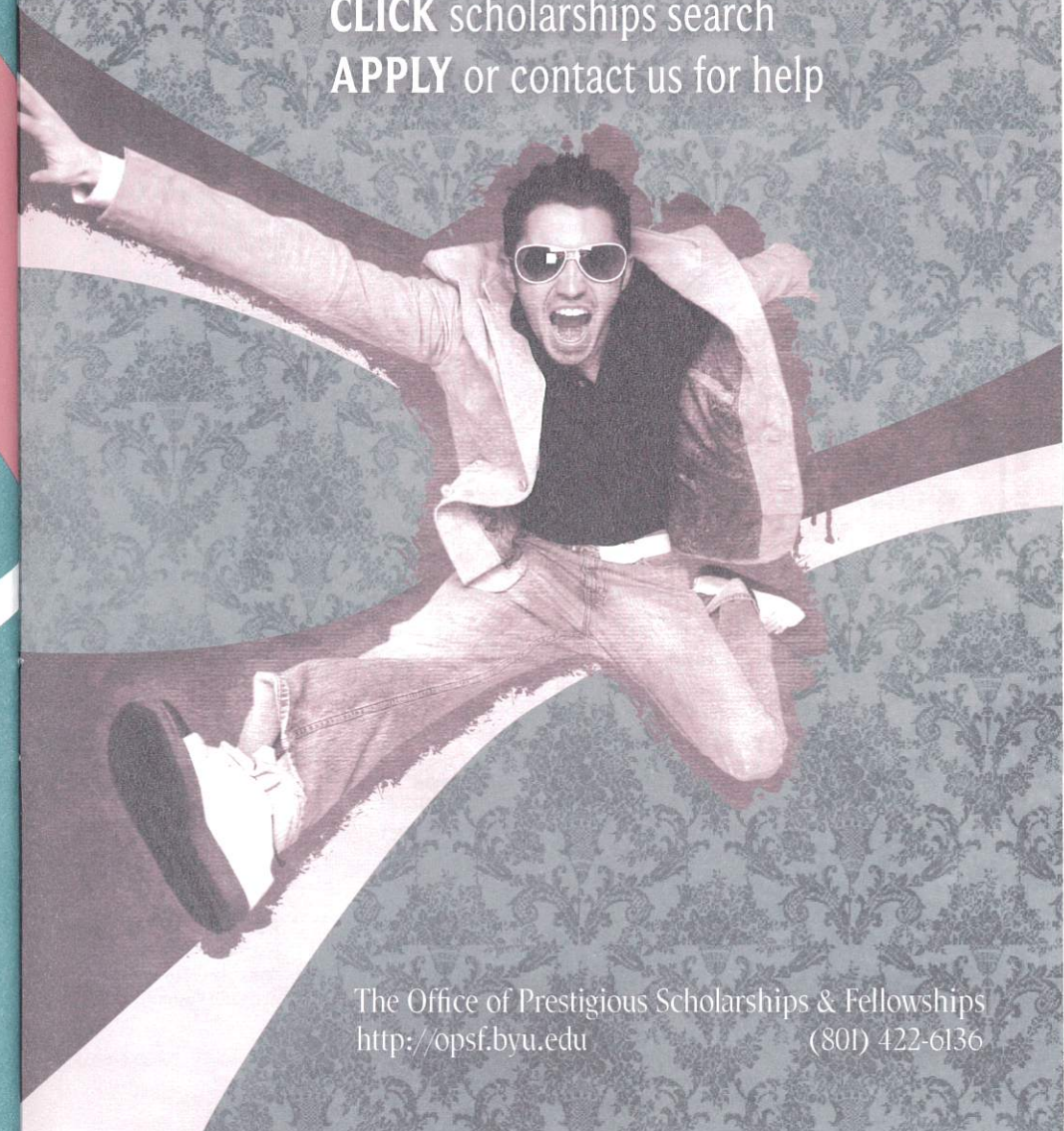
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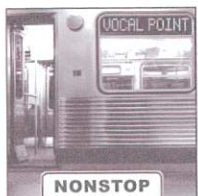


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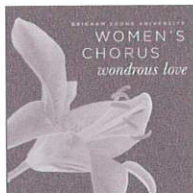
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*Division of Design and Production

Production Staff

Sarah Amundsen
Dramaturg

Sarah is a second year master's student studying restoration theatre. Previous experience includes all forms of backstage work, with a special emphasis in stage management. This is her first experience as a dramaturg and has enjoyed it tremendously.

Allison Dredge
Assistant Makeup
Designer

From Allen, Texas. Junior in theatre arts studies with an emphasis in costume and makeup design. She is currently assisting with the makeup and costume design for BYU's *The Giver*. Her other credits include dressing for BYU's *Little Women* and *Dial "M" for Murder*. As well as costume designing for the student film project, *Box of Rain*. Allison also appeared in the film *Barney: Lets Make Music*.

Mary H. Farahnakian
Costume Designer

Associate professor in the Department of Theatre and Media Arts. Mary currently teaches history of costume and costume design specialty, and construction. In May 2008 received the National Recognition Award, Costume Society of America Annual Symposium New Orleans, Louisiana. Previous costume designs include *Berlin* (stage & film), *The Music Man*, *King Lear*, *Philadelphia Story*, *La Traviata*, *Quilters*, *Macbeth*, *Carmen*, *The Magic Flute*, *The Secret Marriage*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *Gianni Schicchi*, *Man of La Mancha*, *The Gondoliers*, and *My Fair Lady*. Her article, "Dress of ethnic minority immigrants and residents: Middle Eastern people in North America" was published in the *Berg Encyclopaedia of World Dress and Fashion*. Mary is also the curator of the BYU/TMA historic clothing collection

Landen Gates
Assistant Costume
Designer

From Las Vegas, Nevada. Sophomore in theater arts studies with an emphasis in costume design. Recent credits include BYU's mask club production of *A Retched Proposal*. Landen is currently the assistant wardrobe supervisor for the BYU Costume Shop.

Megan Sanborn Jones
Director

Coordinates the theatre arts studies BA and MA programs at BYU. Her scholarly area of research is religious performance in 19th–20th century America and has been published in *Theatre Journal*, *The State of the Art*, and *Theatre Topics*. Her first book, *Performing American Identity in Anti-Mormon Melodrama*, will be released by Routledge Press in April. She is also a director/choreographer with credits including *Angels in America II: Perestroika* (Loring Playhouse, MN), *Great Expectations* (ARTE, UT), *Crazy for You*, *Holes*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (BYU).

Chantel Matheson
Assistant Costume Designer

From Orem, Utah. Senior in theatre art studies with costume design emphasis and studies in French. Previously worked as assistant costume designer on *The Foreigner*.

Kymerly Mellen
Director

On BYU's BFA acting and music dance theatre faculty. Recently displaced from Chicago, her acting credits include work at Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, Writers' Theatre, Northlight Theatre, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Ravinia Festival, Court Theatre, Marriott Theatre, Peninsula Players, and Milwaukee Repertory Theatre. Film credits include *Joseph: Prophet of the Restoration* and the upcoming films *The Poker House* and *The Unborn*. Favorite directing credits include *The Turn of the Screw*, *The Forgotten Carols*, *Children of Eden*, *Blood Brothers* and dramaturgical/assistant directing roles with Timeline Theatre Company and Writers' Theatre.

Dick Merklings
Set Design

From Orem, Utah. Senior in theatre studies. Recent credits include assistant set design for *Dial "M" for Murder* and *Houseboat Honeymoon*.

David Mortensen
Assistant Stage Manager

From Kaysville, Utah. Senior in theatre arts studies emphasizing in directing and dramaturgy. Recent credits include dramaturg for BYU's *Dial "M" for Murder* and director for the BYU Experimental Theatre Company's *Without Fear*. Dave works as a production assistant for the BYU Division of Design and Production.

Sarah Nasson
Sound Designer

From Canton, Connecticut. Junior in theatre arts. Other credits include *Chicago*, *Rave: The Bacchae of Euripide*, and *Cats* (all Hartford, CT). sound/costume designer for *Rabbit Hole*, assistant sound designer for *Dancing at Lughnasa*, sound designer for *A Piece of My Heart*, and sound designer for *Drums in the Night* (BYU).

Rebecca Pendleton
Properties Designer

Senior in theatre studies with a minor in psychology, Rebecca hopes to go into drama therapy. Recent design credits include properties designer for *Dial "M" for Murder* and *Roofsliding* as well as co-scenic and assistant lighting designer for *The Gondoliers*.

Adisti Regar
Assistant Scenic Designer

From Jakarta, Indonesia. Senior in media arts studies and humanities with a minor in design. Recent credits include scenic designer for *Houseboat Honeymoon*, assistant scenic designer for *Berlin*, and art director for student films *Dirt* and *Best Wishes! Love, Adele*, all at BYU. Adisti is also production designing *The Book of Jerzmiah*, a new web series by TMA.

Christina Tibbetts
Lighting Designer

From Mesa, Arizona. Senior in theatre arts studies. Recent credits include assistant sound designer for *Stuck on the Edge*, sound designer for *The Seagull*, sound designer for *Roofsliding*, sound designer for *Houseboat Honeymoon*, and assistant sound designer for *Thoroughly Modern Millie*.

Richie Uminski
Stage Manager

From San Antonio, Texas. Junior in theatre education. Recent credits include assistant stage manager for BYU's *Dial "M" for Murder*, Ensemble in *The Yellow Boat*, James in *The Prettiest Girl in Lafayette County* both Mask Club productions, and Brian in the new Internet series *The Book of Jerzmiah*. He is currently the Nelke resident stage manager.

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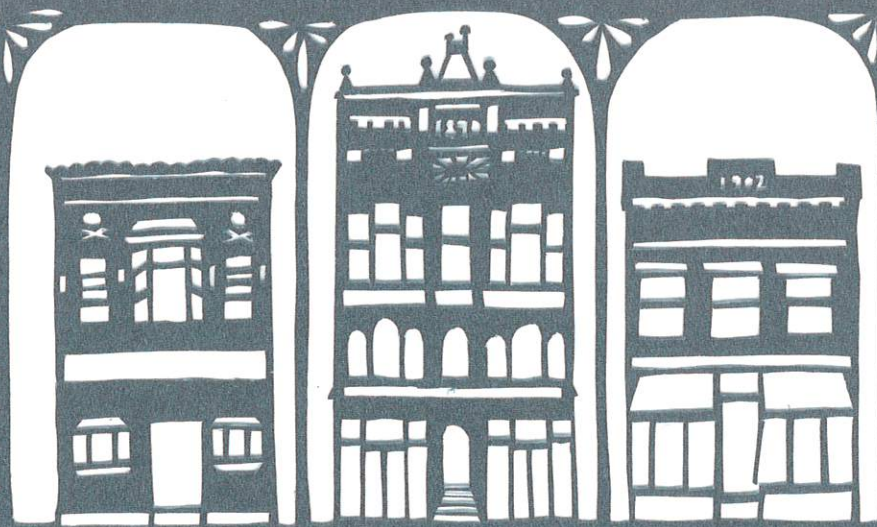
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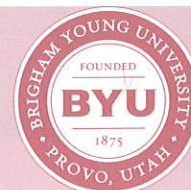
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Rebecca Pendleton

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Nichole Clement

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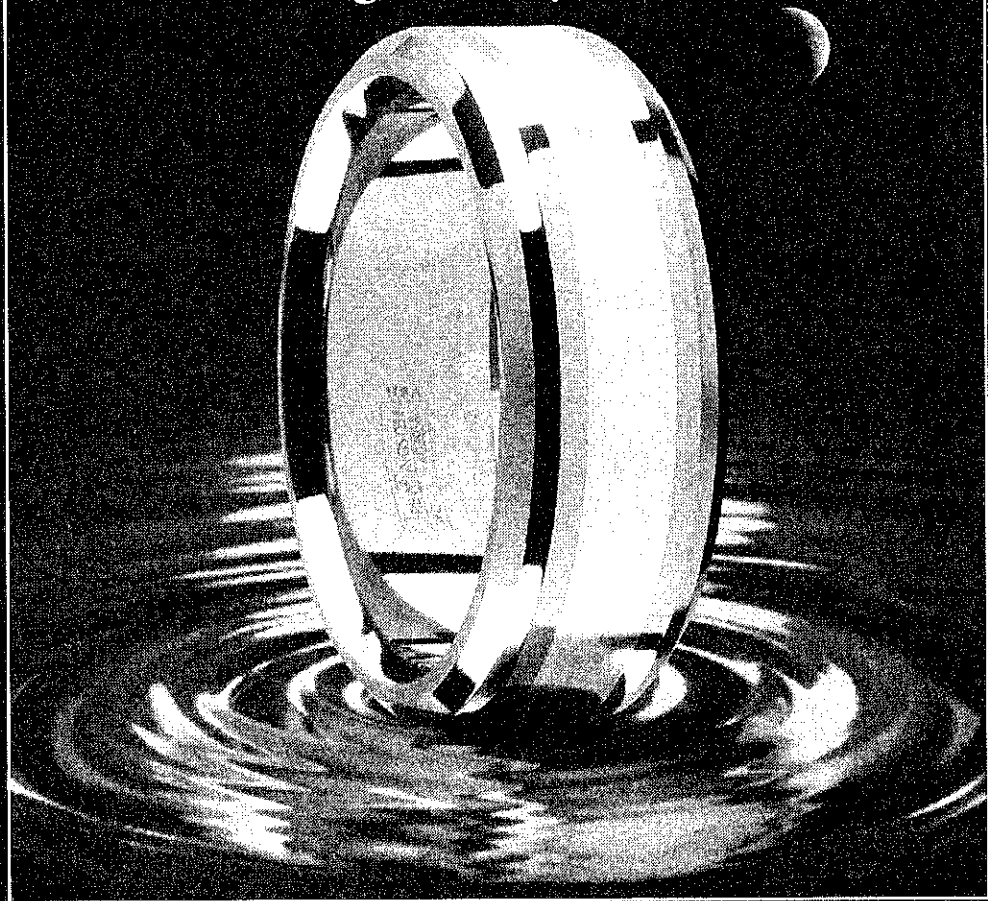
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